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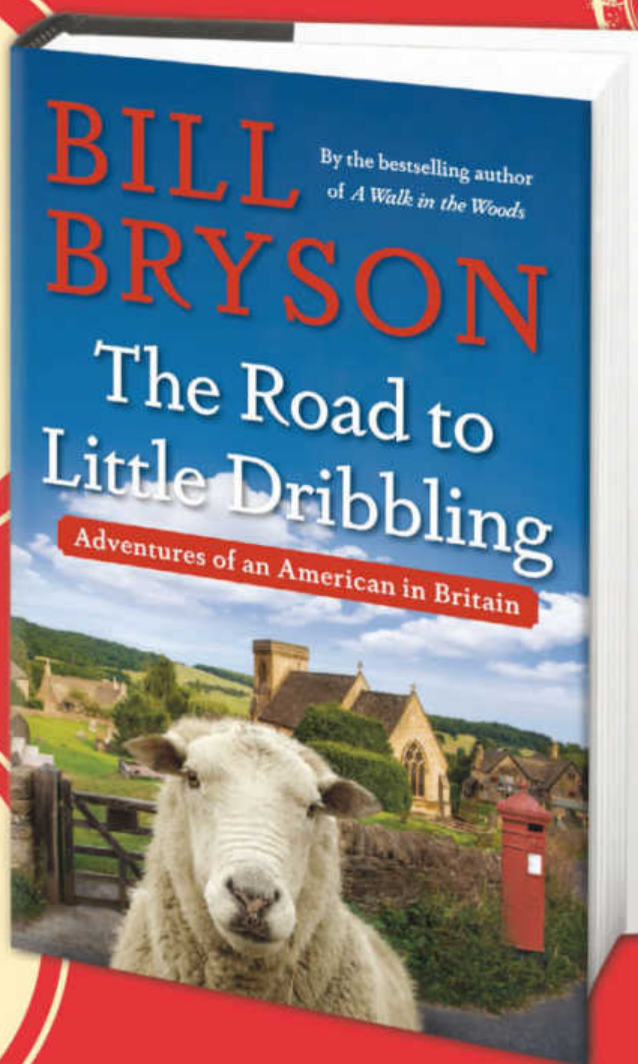
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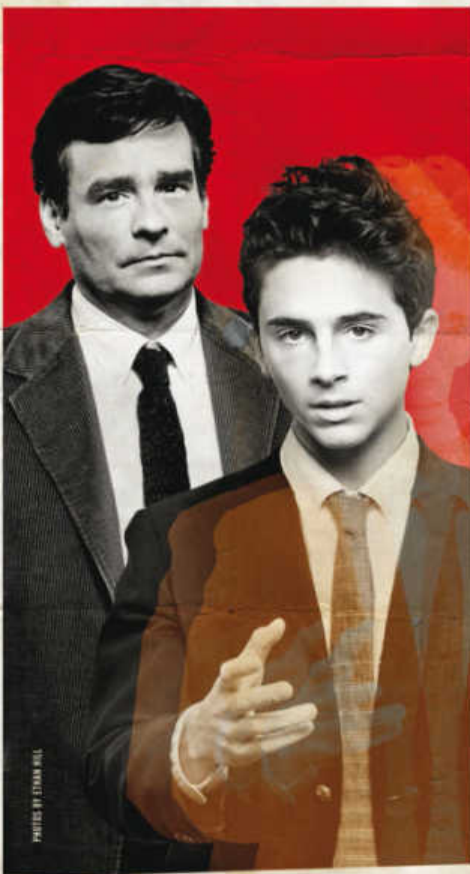
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## CONTRIBUTORS

**RYAN LIZZA** ("THE DUEL," P. 38) is a Washington correspondent for *The New Yorker* and a political commentator for CNN.

**ALEC WILKINSON** ("TIME IS A GHOST," P. 22), a regular contributor, is the author of ten books, including "The Protest Singer" and "The Ice Balloon."

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**HUGH MARTIN** (POEM, P. 52), a veteran of the Iraq War, is the author of "The Stick Soldiers."

**ADAM EHRLICH SACHS** (FICTION, P. 58) will publish "Inherited Disorders: Stories & Syndromes," his debut work of fiction, in May.

**NATHAN HELLER** (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 62) has been writing for the magazine since 2011.

**ADAM KIRSCH** (BOOKS, P. 68) directs the M.A. program in Jewish Studies at Columbia University. "Emblems of the Passing World" is his new book of poems.

**BARRY BLITT** (COVER) drew the illustrations for the children's book "You Never Heard of Casey Stengel?!", which comes out in March.

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**SLIDE SHOW:** Philip Larkin's tender and inquisitive photography.

**VIDEO:** "Shorts & Murmurs" introduces "Socially Awkward Dance Moves," including "The Subtle Modifying of the Unreciprocated Wave Into a Stretch." Plus, this week's episode of "Comma Queen," featuring *Mary Norris*.

**PAGE-TURNER:** Can putting your laptop and smartphone away for three days teach you to be more deliberate about device usage? *Matthew J. X. Malady* writes about the useless agony of going offline.

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# THE MAIL

## THE RESTORER'S ROLE

In discussing the digital component of the artist Josh Kline's work, which relies on technology that doesn't yet exist, Ben Lerner makes a comparison to the computer-generated restoration of the "Harvard Murals," a suite of paintings by Mark Rothko ("The Custodians," January 11th). In the early nineteen-sixties, as an apprentice in the conservation department of Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, I was among the crew that worked with Rothko on the installation. Lerner describes the murals' recent exhibition at the Harvard Art Museum, in which color that was fading was made more vivid by the projection of computer-generated hues. Lerner suggests that the original art may not be necessary if projectors could produce the same effects. As the former head of conservation at the Harvard University Art Museums, I disagree. I maintain that the experiment with projected color brought us closer to that of the originals. Lerner did not see the exhibition, but, had he been there, he would have been able to experience the haptic effect of Rothko's brushwork, seen on a huge scale. The colored light did not obscure the painter's application of layers of various media—egg white, glue-size, oil—that suffuse the clouded, glowing expanse of canvas. Hue and substance were reintegrated. Though Lerner questions whether "the present's notion of its past and future are changeable fictions," he gives short shrift to the aim of conservationists, which is to find ever more accurate and responsible methods of preserving and restoring original works of art.

*Marjorie B. Cohn*  
Arlington, Mass.

Lerner's article discusses the challenges that museums face as they seek to conserve nontraditional art. The work in question, Josh Kline's "Cost of Living (Aleyda)," at the Whitney, is made up of 3-D-printed objects whose data files offer a higher resolution than is attainable with current printers. The result is a piece that will change as technology develops, acquiring greater detail than

what was on display. A conservation team is thus faced with a conundrum: as Lerner writes, "Once you start replicating parts, when is the work no longer the work?" Although this seems like a new concern in modern art, it's a familiar quandary in other artistic disciplines. James Gleick, in "The Information," lays out a parallel in music. Where in a Beethoven piano sonata is the music? he asks. The music is not the printed score or the performance, Gleick suggests; rather, "The music is the information." The same can be said about Kline's work. The printed objects are, in a real sense, not the point at all. The art exists in the data—the information. Perhaps, then, it would be more fruitful for the museum to consider how best to preserve the data files, rather than what is on display.

*Oberon Onmura*  
New York City

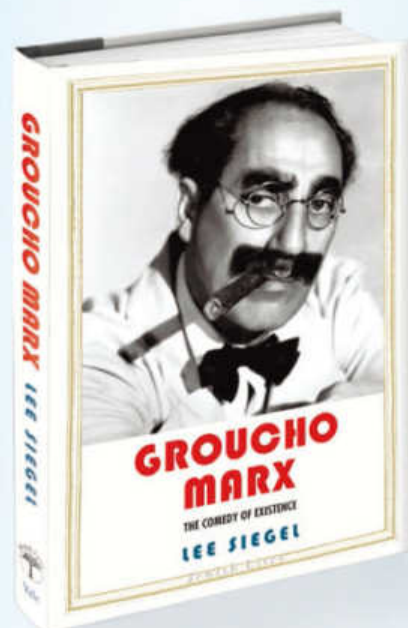
## SCHOOL OF ROCK

Nick Paumgarten's piece on Ashima Shiraishi provided a fascinating background story for an incredible young climber ("The Wall Dancer," January 11th). Many people in the climbing community have watched her development with great interest—and not a small twinge of jealousy. Her accomplishments, as Paumgarten says, may make her the first female climber to "transcend gender." But Shiraishi, as talented as she is, is part of a long legacy of women climbers, like Lynn Hill. Hill was the first person (male or female) to climb the "nose" of Yosemite's El Capitan in a free ascent (that is, without the aid of gear and with no ropes other than those used to protect from a fall). Hill is one of the best climbers of all time. Shiraishi has the opportunity to join the ranks of the elite, but she won't be the first female to do so.

*Kevin Wehr*  
Sacramento, Calif.

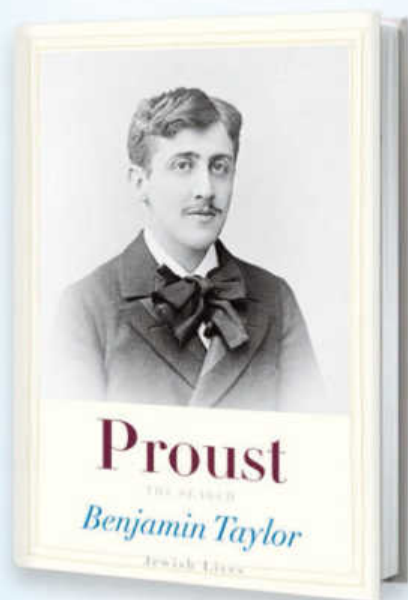
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

JAN / FEB  
2016

WEDNESDAY  
27TH

THURSDAY  
28TH

FRIDAY  
29TH

SATURDAY  
30TH

SUNDAY  
31ST

MONDAY  
1ST

TUESDAY  
2ND

**WET SOUNDS LIKE A** harbinger of a pop future that's tantalizingly close. The trio formed, in 2007, as New York college students whose musical interests drifted between lo-fi folk, brainy electronica, and slow-burn R. & B. In 2013, they stirred those three disparate sounds into an arresting self-titled E.P. On its four tracks, the lead vocalist and songwriter, Kelly Zutrau, sings about heartbreak, dishing out honeyed, first-crush platitudes ("My baby, he don't love me no more") over the ruminating laptop compositions of her bandmates, Joe Valle and Marty Sulkow. Wet's high-low dexterity—a *Billboard* brain with a D.I.Y. body, Brandy by way of Björk—has loyalists pining for its self-produced major-label debut, "Don't You." The band will celebrate the release with two engagements, at Bowery Ballroom (Jan. 28) and Rough Trade (Jan. 29).

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH RENSTROM

CLASSICAL MUSIC | ART  
NIGHT LIFE | MOVIES  
THE THEATRE | DANCE  
ABOVE & BEYOND  
FOOD & DRINK





# CLASSICAL MUSIC

## OPERA

### Metropolitan Opera

Donizetti's so-called Tudor Queens trilogy returns for its second installment, "**Maria Stuarda**," dedicated to the much maligned Catholic queen put to death by Elizabeth I. The big news is still that the soprano Sondra Radvanovsky is singing all three of the cycle's heroines in a single season, but the opera's most viscerally thrilling moment comes when Mary, Queen of Scots (Radvanovsky), and Elizabeth I (Elza van den Heever) lock horns for a blazing fourteen-minute showdown—complete with coloratura fireworks—that forms the centerpiece of the opera; Riccardo Frizza conducts. (Jan. 29 and Feb. 1 at 7:30.) • **Also playing:** Penny Woolcock's gorgeous but smartly updated new production of "**Les Pêcheurs de Perles**" ("The Pearl Fishers") goes a long way toward reconciling Bizet's splendorous Orientalist fantasy with the need for cultural awareness in a post-postcolonial world. In the hands of an ace cast—Diana Damrau (Leila), Mariusz Kwiecien (Zurga), and Matthew Polenzani (a truly astonishing Nadir)—the vocal lines weave into the musical fabric like flowers in exquisite embroidery. The orchestra's playing is thoroughly pretty, but the conductor Gianandrea Noseda can whip up tempests of anger, revenge, jealousy, and confusion whenever necessary. (Jan. 27 at 7:30 and Jan. 30 at 8. Antony Walker replaces Noseda in the first performance.) • With their parallel plots of jilted lovers left out in the cold, the one-act operas "**Cavalleria Rusticana**," by Pietro Mascagni, and "**Pagliacci**," by Ruggero Leoncavallo, are a perfect double bill. David McVicar's production teases out their differences, however, contrasting the grim fatalism of the former with the dashed optimism of the latter. The conductor Fabio Luisi leads a cast that's at home in the works' highly emotive verismo style, which includes Violeta Urmana, Barbara Frittoli, Yonghoon Lee, and Roberto Alagna in the leading roles. (Jan. 28 and Feb. 2 at 7:30.) • The season's final performance of Puccini's "**Turandot**" features Nina Stemme, a powerhouse

singer of Wagner and Strauss, leading a cast that also includes Anita Hartig (a splendid Liù), Marco Berti, and Alexander Tsybalyuk (a refreshingly virile Timur), under the sturdy baton of Paolo Carignani. (Jan. 30 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES New York Philharmonic

This week, the orchestra performs a program conducted by Juanjo Mena, the Spanish maestro who currently leads the BBC Philharmonic, in Manchester. It's a substantial offering, beginning with Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with the Canadian violinist James Ehnes, an artist of impeccable technique, out front) and concluding with Bruckner's Symphony No. 6 in A Major (in the Nowak edition). (David Geffen Hall. Jan. 27-28 at 7:30 and Jan. 29-30 at 8.) • Esa-Pekka Salonen, a man very much on the minds of the Philharmonic's players and their listeners, acts as curator and host of one of the orchestra's "Contact!" concerts, at Williamsburg's National Sawdust. A celebration of the composer-conductor's musical patrimony, it features important works (some with an antic spirit) by Lutoslawski (the String Quartet), Donatoni ("Hot," a pocket saxophone concerto), Castiglioni, and Salonen ("Floof," for soprano and four players, long his calling card). The musicians include the soprano Hila Plitmann, the pianist Eric Huebner, and the conductor Joshua Gersen. (80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. Feb. 1 at 7:30.) (nyphil.org.)

### Anima Eterna Brugge

The orchestra of Bruges, not well known on this side of the Atlantic but esteemed in Europe for its strong work in the Baroque and Classical repertoires (and for forays well beyond), makes its U.S. debut this week, at Alice Tully Hall. Led by its founder, Jos van Immerseel, it performs an all-Beethoven program—the "Egmont" Overture, the Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major (with van Immerseel on fortepiano), and the Fifth Symphony. (212-721-6500. Jan. 28 at 7:30.)

### "Focus! 2016: Milton Babbitt's World"

The outstanding musicians of the Juilliard School are celebrating the genius of Babbitt (1916-2011), one of Juilliard's longtime faculty members and the ultimate American master of twelve-tone complexity. The final concert in the series is the grandest, with Jeffrey Milarsky leading the Juilliard Orchestra in music that neatly encapsulates the composer's classical-music passions: Brahms (Erich Leinsdorf's orchestration of Brahms's melting chorale prelude "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"), Stravinsky (the fiercely balletic "Variations"), and Schoenberg (the

iridescent Five Pieces for Orchestra), concluding with Babbitt's own Piano Concerto No. 2 (with a gifted young soloist, Conor Hanick). (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 29 at 7:30. For ticket information and a complete schedule, visit events.juilliard.edu.)

### Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

The latest program from the admired conductorless chamber orchestra unfolds as a chain of musical influences. Haydn's triumphal Symphony No. 1 is followed by the tempestuous Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor by his stellar younger colleague Mozart (with the young Georgian soloist Khatia Buniatishvili); Anton Arensky's "Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky," a poignant tribute to the Master, which adapts one of his "Sixteen Songs for Children"; and the Suite No. 2 for Two Pianos by Rachmaninoff, a onetime student of Arensky, arranged for orchestra by the multifaceted American composer Paul Chihara. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 30 at 7.)

### Curtis Symphony Orchestra

When it comes to modern music, the students and faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music, a revered but profoundly conservative institution, are making up for a lot of lost time: witness this program by its superb orchestra, which would have been unimaginable not long ago. Ludovic Morlot, the dynamic maestro of the Seattle Symphony, wraps up the concert with Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in D Major, but preludes the piece with two twentieth-century masterworks—Busoni's "Berceuse Élégiacque" (which Mahler, in his final concert, world-premiered with the New York Philharmonic in 1911) and Berio's "Sinfonia" (joined by members of Curtis Opera Theatre), a work that radically reimagines what a symphony can be. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 1 at 8.)

## RECITALS

### Denis Matsuev

The young Russian pianist, noted for both his straight-ahead style and his blistering technique, offers a programmatic recital of Romantic and Russian influences: Tchaikovsky's "The Seasons," a collection of twelve pieces that depict the characteristics of the passing months; Schumann's "Kreisleriana," which follows Hoffmann's character through fantastical iterations of his half-mad genius; and Stravinsky's Three Movements from "Petrushka," which the composer adapted from his ballet about the ill-fated puppet. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 27 at 8.)

### Music at the Metropolitan Museum: Jordi Savall and Juilliard 415

The legendary Catalan gambist leads the grateful young charges of

Juilliard's period-performance group in a program marking the four-hundredth anniversary of the deaths of Shakespeare and Cervantes, with music from the era of the Spanish Armada and the Anglo-Spanish War. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Jan. 30 at 7.)

### "Seeing Music": Brentano String Quartet

The mighty Brentanos, whose intellectual curiosity matches their virtuosity, take part in one of the more interesting concerts in the 92nd Street Y's new series. They perform an arrangement of Bach's "Art of Fugue" as part of an interactive performance installation—inspired by the interplay of Bach's contrapuntal lines and by the children's game cat's cradle—by the engineer Gabriel Calatrava (son of Santiago), which will be operated by dancers choreographed by John-Mario Sevilla. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Jan. 30 at 8.)

### Jonas Kaufmann and Helmut Deutsch

The opera superstar, accompanied by Deutsch, his frequent collaborator, defies the pressure of a high-profile recital on Carnegie Hall's largest stage—an arena where he's triumphed before—with a program featuring big-name song collections by Mahler ("Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen") and Britten ("Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo"), as well as crowd favorites from Richard Strauss. (212-721-6500. Jan. 31 at 2.)

### Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

The Society presents the complete Beethoven quartets in a dynamic cycle by five of today's top ensembles. The Jerusalem String Quartet, renowned for its warm, elastic sound and seamless musicianship, kicks off the celebration with the earliest works, the Opus 18 quartets, which they shared in an exquisite recording this summer. They begin with Opus 18 No. 3, the first that Beethoven wrote. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Jan. 31 at 5 and Feb. 2 at 7:30.)

### "Composers Now" Festival: Nadia Sirota

In February, the organization will be supporting dozens of new-music performances around the city. It's appropriate that one of the first is by the enterprising young violist, who has been at the center of the genre-crossing scene for several years. Her concert at Symphony Space (the first of several) is titled "Old and New," an evening in which Sirota joins Liam Byrne and other viol players in music by Byrd, Gibbons, Nico Muhly ("Slow"), and a U.S. premiere from David Lang ("Just"). (Broadway at 95th St. symphonyspace.org. Feb. 1 at 7:30.)

# ART

## MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

### METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"A New Look at a Van Eyck Masterpiece." Through April 24.

### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Picasso Sculpture." Through Feb. 7.

### MOMA PS1

"Greater New York." Through March 7.

### GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Photo-Poetics: An Anthology." Through March 23.

### THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

"Frank Stella: A Retrospective." Through Feb. 7.

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861-2008." Through March 13.

### BRONX MUSEUM

"Martin Wong: Human Instamatic." Through Feb. 14.

### NEW MUSEUM

"Pia Camil: A Pot for a Latch." Through April 17.

### SCULPTURECENTER

"The Eccentrics." Through April 4.

### STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

"A Constellation." Through March 6.

## GALLERIES SHORT LIST

### CHELSEA

Tauba Auerbach

Cooper  
534 W. 21st St.  
212-255-1105.  
Through Feb. 13.

Ilse D'Hollander

Sean Kelly  
475 Tenth Ave., at 36th St.  
212-239-1181.  
Through Feb. 6.

### DOWNTOWN

Moir Dryer

11R  
195 Chrystie St.  
212-982-1930.  
Through Feb. 7.

Betty Woodman

Salon 94 Bowery  
243 Bowery, at Stanton St.  
212-979-0001.  
Through Feb. 21.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Metropolitan Museum

"Wordplay: Matthias Buchinger's Drawings from the Collection of Ricky Jay"

The focus of this historical show of prints, drawings, books, and manuscripts, involving words and letters by numerous artists and artisans, are works by and about Buchinger (1674-1739), a German artist and performer who was born without hands and feet and stood just twenty-nine inches tall. He barnstormed fairs, inns, and courts in Germany, France, England, and Ireland in the early eighteenth century, exhibiting his skills as a calligrapher who specialized in micrography: drawing with lines of infinitesimal text, such that a normal-looking head of hair might turn out, on close inspection, to transcribe in swirling cursive a chapter of the Bible. How he did this not even Ricky Jay knows for sure. Jay, the superlative card magician and a scholar and collector of antique marvels, lent nearly all the Buchinger material here. The convergence of Jay's eccentric pursuits with disciplined art history is a bit of a stretch for the Met, but it is gracefully handled, and defensible on a couple of grounds. One is a revealing focus on developments of calligraphy and decorative letter forms—seeing doubled with reading. The other is a dramatizing of the drive for self-fulfillment, which artists share with prodigious individuals in any field. Through April 11.

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Janet Fish

There's a surprising historical kick to this show of early work by the snazzy still-life realist. Fish, a member of the Yale School of Art's early-sixties greatest generation, abruptly applied her training in Abstract Expressionism to tabletop splendors: plastic packages and glass vessels filled with foods and fluids, crazed with reflected and refracted light. Her paintings from the sixties and early seventies find a gestural style given yeoman's work to do: shrink-wrap glorified, a jar of pickles in excelsis, and, without a doubt, the finest ever portrait of Windex. It's a funny sort of triumph, but eye-opening still. Through Feb. 13. (DC Moore, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-247-2111.)

### Giorgio Griffa

The Italian painter, who turns eighty this year, uses raw, unstretched canvas as the support for his frugal abstractions. The works here date from the seventies, when Griffa made repetitive marks (daubed stains, thin pinstripes, hazy bands) in violet, seafoam, and sunflower yellow. Often, the painted lines or blotches begin in the top-left corner and proceed right and downward, giving the marks a linguistic frisson. But, in every case,



Mernet Larsen's absurdist block figures emphasize painting as an act of construction. The septuagenarian American artist exhibits her new work (including "Alphie," above) at the Cohan gallery through Feb. 21.

spare, deliberate compositions merge with the unprimed canvas. You are always aware that the paintings are objects pinned to the wall—not windows onto another world but, rather, makeshift curtains drawn across it. Through Feb. 6. (Kaplan, 121 W. 27th St. 212-645-7335.)

### Lisa Oppenheim

Works in a range of materials, including woven textiles, are united by a focus on pattern, both natural and man-made. Photographs of wood grains are paired to suggest Rorschach tests, or arranged in quartets that resemble radio waves and stylized landscapes. With a nod to Sherrie Levine, Oppenheim deftly connects the conceptual and the decorative. In an installation that incorporates slabs of ceramic tile, grainy images of smoke, appropriated from a photograph of a kiln by Manuel Álvarez Bravo, link the ephemeral

to the elemental. Through Feb. 20. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

### Lauren Silva

Standing out from today's populous ranks of young abstract painters is Silva—a Californian, born in 1987—who has amazing technique and swimmy charm. She prints color-fieldish digital designs on lustrous charmeuse silk, wrapped around stretchers, and adds details in acrylic, ink, and paper collage. Blurry, jittery, borderline-goofy images, swanning around in shallow pictorial depth, seem to mean well without meaning much. They're like music in that way, as are Silva's orchestrations of toothsome colors, keyed to dominants: grape purple, say, or mustard or peach. Once you start looking, you're in no mood to stop. Through Feb. 6. (Zieher Smith & Horton, 516 W. 20th St. 212-229-1088.)



## Penelope Umbrico

Hundreds of images, all found online, of sunshine streaming through the arched windows of McKim, Mead, and White's former Penn Station reify photography's relationship to light. But the centerpiece here is the moon, always full, seen in images scavenged from Flickr. On one wall, more than six hundred shots converge in one dazzling array; more are reproduced, end to end, on a thirty-six-foot scroll. Lunar mystery is diluted in Umbrico's pile-it-on process, but a weird beauty shines through. Through Feb. 20. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

## "Looking Back: The 10th White Columns Annual"

Every January, this essential nonprofit institution invites an artist, a writer, or a curator to choose his or her

favorite works from the previous year, offering an idiosyncratic path through the labyrinthine New York art world. For this anniversary edition, the director Matthew Higgs takes the reins himself, favoring the modest, the small-scale, and the unprepossessing. Assiduous gallerygoers will recall Susan Cianciolo's kit of shoes, gloves, and accessories, or Kevin Beasley's wall-mounted disk of used polo shirts and jeans, but there are surprises, too, thanks to Higgs's longtime advocacy of artists working outside the gallery system. In the watercolors of Ray Lopez, who is affiliated with New York's Healing Arts Initiative, Bette Davis, Audrey Hepburn, and Marilyn Monroe mutate into androgynous anonymities, abstractions of a very personal kind. Through Feb. 20. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN "Timeless: Photographs by Kamoinge"

Kamoinge is a collective of African-American photographers, still active today, which was established in 1963 to address exclusion from the mainstream media, museums, and galleries. This fine show (which coincides with the publication of a new book) includes pictures, mostly in black-and-white, by nineteen current and former members. Many of them take an incisive and idiosyncratic approach to photojournalism. Standouts in that vein include Gerald Cyrus, Albert Fennar, Frank Stewart, and Beuford Smith, whose images exude both vitality and earnest engagement. Ming Smith subverts that tradition with her portrait of the jazz musician Sun Ra, blurred and daubed with swirls of blue and gold paint that conjure his cosmic

sound. Through Feb. 20. (Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba, 219 E. 2nd St. 212-674-3939.)

## "Language of the Birds: Occult and Art"

More than five dozen artists in this stargazing, soothsaying show share an interest in the dark arts. Some, such as Brion Gysin and the Los Angeles mystic known as Cameron, find real elegance and delicacy in the world of magic; others, including the sculptors Kiki Smith and Carol Bove, employ spiritual signs and characters to critical ends. But to reach these works you must endure enough goddesses, snakes, flying creatures, and pyramids to make even Aleister Crowley (whose "trance portraits" are also on view) yearn for a return to the Enlightenment. Through Feb. 15. (80WSE, 80 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-5747.)



## ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### 50 Cent

Few people have been able to monetize gangsta rap as effectively as Curtis Jackson. The Queens rapper squeezed feature films, clothing lines, fragrances, video games, high-end headphones, and more out of a music career that's moved some thirty million records. He also declared bankruptcy last summer: the rapper has long been anything but predictable. His latest album, "The Kanan Tape," is inspired by a character from the television series he produces, "Power," currently airing on Starz. The record is a return to the burly, gristly narratives of his earliest material, and it invites younger players (Sonny Digital, Post Malone) to ride shotgun. (Highline Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. Jan. 31.)

### Flying Lotus

The electronica musician Steven Ellison is a central figure in L.A.'s burgeoning jazz-indebted instrumental renaissance, which includes his frequent collaborators Kendrick Lamar, the saxophonist Kamasi Washington, and the bassist Thundercat. Ellison's compositions as Flying Lotus are grounded in the melding of frenetic, programmed beats with glistening jazz motifs, which sometimes evoke his great-aunt Alice Coltrane. For this

show, he'll be highlighting tunes from his most recent record, "You're Dead!," a wide-ranging, unpredictable collection that embraces prog rock, R. & B., and Italian film scores. (Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Jan. 29.)

### Krallice

Tastes change and evolve, and the black-metal idiom—long considered unlistenable by all but the most misanthropic music fans—has recently reemerged with enough cultural capital to warrant theory symposia, a Ridley Scott-produced feature film, and a yoga practice. A star of the movement is this avant-bleak Brooklyn quartet, a true supergroup that builds sustained, progressive compositions from mouse-heartbeat-speed drum blasts and the dizzyingly technical noodling of the guitarist Mick Barr. Saint Vitus—a Greenpoint bar with a front door made from, you guessed it, black metal—has become the group's incubator, and on Jan. 30 Krallice settles in to perform songs from its excellent new E.P., "Hyperion." (1120 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn. saintvitusbar.com. Jan. 30.)

### Silent Servant

It's impossible for fans of electronic music to discount the influence of the multinational label and production collective Sandwell District. United by a belief in the intellectual possibilities of techno, this close-knit group of producers redefined the genre with a refined sound that has a defiant,

post-punk slant. Its industrial-style album covers were crafted by the L.A. designer and producer John Juan Mendez, who performs as Silent Servant. Since the collective's demise, in 2012, Mendez has stayed busy with his own music: pitch-black warehouse bangers that pair well with ripped jeans and black leather. This week, he steps in at this recently reopened D.I.Y. venue, joined by the local krautrock visionaries of **Forma**. (The Market Hotel, 961 Broadway, Brooklyn. markethotel.org. Jan. 30.)

### Bruce Springsteen

In December, Columbia reissued Springsteen's 1980 standard, "The River," as "The Ties That Bind: The River Collection," a boxed set including DVDs, glossy booklets, and a batch of never-before-heard studio takes. Springsteen and the E-Street Band took to "Saturday Night Live" shortly after, where they delivered a ripping performance of the previously unreleased "Meet Me in the City," breathlessly capturing the graceful mettle that's made the Boss such an enduring Big Apple icon. He returns to New York City for the first time since 2012, as part of his nine-week River Tour. (Madison Square Garden, Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. 800-745-3000. Jan. 27.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Billy Childs

On his inventive yet respectful 2014 album, "Map to the Treasure—Reimagining Laura Nyro," the pianist Childs renews the glorious work of one of the greatest, if still too often neglected, titans of the singer-songwriter era. The project was an all-star affair; here, Childs's vision is made solid with support by the **Parker String Quartet** and the singers **Becca Stevens** and **Alicia Olatuja**. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Jan. 26-28.)

## Our Love Is Here to Stay: The George Gershwin Songbook

If George Gershwin had composed nothing other than "I Got Rhythm," the jazz community would still owe him big time. But Gershwin did much, much more in his abbreviated career, and his majestically tuneful work continues to provide boundless inspiration. The trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis** will lead his crack ensemble in a tribute to the genius of popular song. (Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Jan. 28-30.)

### Buster Poindexter

Bearing a striking resemblance to the proto-punk singer David Johansen, Poindexter brings his louche charm, biting wit, and encyclopedic knowledge of American blues and pop to what has quickly become his new home away from home. He's a raspy-voiced charmer who works this tony room like it's a funky beer-and-ribs joint. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Jan. 26-Feb. 6.)

### Craig Taborn

During a residency at the Stone, one of the brighter lights of new-jazz piano runs the gamut from solo performances to duets with **Val Jeanty**, on electronics, and **Mat Maneri**, on viola, to trios with the bassist **William Parker** and the drummer **Gerald Cleaver** and larger ensembles that include the likes of **Matt Mitchell**, on keyboards, and **Dave King**, on drums. (Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. Jan. 26-31.)

### Ben Vereen

The multitalented actor, singer, and dancer perfected his craft with such masters as Bob Fosse, with whom he worked on "Sweet Charity," "Pippin," and the film "All That Jazz." A Tony Award-winner, Vereen is old school in the best sense: he's out to give it his all, and he won't leave the stage until he's done just that. (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. Jan. 25-30.)



The director Agnès Varda, seen in the mirror, interviews the actress Jane Birkin in the filmed portrait “Jane B. by Agnès V.”

## FAMILY AFFAIR

*Jane Birkin and her daughter Charlotte Gainsbourg merge life and art onscreen.*

**IT WASN'T ENOUGH FOR** Serge Gainsbourg (who died in 1991) to be one of the best singer-songwriters of his time. He was also a media artist who made scandal and degradation central to his work and included his family in it—notably his partner Jane Birkin and their daughter, Charlotte Gainsbourg, whose movies will be screened at Film Society of Lincoln Center (Jan. 29-Feb. 7).

Gainsbourg directed Birkin in the 1976 erotic drama “Je T'Aime Moi Non Plus” (“I Love You Me Neither”), playing Jan. 30, in which she's often featured in full-frontal nudity, enacting humiliating and masochistic sex scenes that come off as blatant provocations. He upped the ante in 1986 (six years after their breakup), with “Charlotte For Ever” (Feb. 5 and Feb. 7), starring Charlotte, who was born in 1971, as a fourteen-year-old girl whose father (played by Gainsbourg) is sexually obsessed with her—and whom Gainsbourg, seemingly leering through the camera, shows nearly nude.

In the mid-eighties, the director Agnès Varda worked with Birkin and Charlotte Gainsbourg on two films that are as artistically audacious as they are original in their approach to sex and the female body. In “Jane B. by Agnès V.” (Jan. 31 and Feb. 6), Birkin submits herself to—and invigorates—Varda's playful imagination. The director interviews Birkin about her life, her family, and her career, often from inside the frame, showing the camera and the crew, too. Though Birkin—staring into the lens—expresses a desire to be filmed as herself, as she is at home, Varda also places her into a wide variety of skit-like fantasy scenes. Birkin plays Joan of Arc and Ariadne, acts in a Western and in an art-world film noir, and appears in tableaux vivants of Renaissance paintings.

The film's most tender sequence shows Serge Gainsbourg carefully coaching Birkin through one of his songs, which she then performs in concert at the Bataclan. A daringly inventive scene of Birkin in the nude—a slow tracking shot from her toes to her face, scanning her body like a landscape and

ending in a confrontational closeup—conveys an eroticism that's vibrant with complicity and breathless curiosity.

The movie also depicts the making of Varda's drama “Kung-Fu Master!” (Jan. 31 and Feb. 5), based on a story by Birkin, which they filmed at the same time. Birkin plays a single mother who begins a relationship with a fourteen-year-old boy, her daughter's classmate. The girl is played by Charlotte Gainsbourg; the boy is played by Varda's son, Mathieu Demy. The romance is filmed as if in the conditional tense, fusing its fantasy with a clear-eyed view of its recklessly dangerous impracticality.

—Richard Brody



## NOW PLAYING

### Aferim!

The Romanian director Radu Jude pioneers a new genre—the Wallachian Western—and brings style and insight to a historical tale of pursuit and persecution. The action is set in 1835, in the southern region of Romania, where the Roma people are held as slaves, noblemen wield tyrannical power, and Russian and Turkish occupiers terrorize the populace. There, a crusty lawman named Constantin and his awkward and mild-mannered son Ionita have been dispatched to find a warlord's runaway slave, Carfin. Travelling on horseback through plains and swampland, Constantin abuses the weak and grovels before the mighty, all the while sharing life-worn wisdom with his son. Their encounters—a revealing cross-section of ethnic and economic divisions—are tinged with collected ignorance and sedimented hatreds passed down through generations, especially in the name of religion. Jude's avid eye for material details and cultural nuances lends the drama an anthropological specificity. The crisp black-and-white photography and brisk panning shots across alluring landscapes capture the cruelty of the times and the pitiless course of history with a bitter majesty. In Romanian.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

### Anomalisa

Has anyone previously employed stop-motion animation for the purposes of sadness? That, certainly, is the tone set by Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson in this new film, which finds Michael Stone (voiced by David Thewlis), a customer-service guru, flying into Cincinnati to give a speech. He takes a cab into town, checks in to a hotel, meets up with an old flame, has sex with a new flame, and flies home to Los Angeles. So much for plot. From this humdrum material the filmmakers have fashioned something singular and strange, not least in its alarming uniformity; all the figures, regardless of age and sex, bear much the same face, and all of their lines are spoken by Tom Noonan. Just as we start to wonder if humanity has been factory-farmed, Michael stumbles upon an exception—Lisa (Jennifer Jason Leigh), who sounds different, and whose very existence, therefore, holds the promise of a new start. Is she for real, though? And will she last? The movie is stained with dour comedy, and there's no mistaking the complaints that it levels against a consumer society; the dexterity of the animation is matched only by the fog of its ineffable gloom. With music by Carter Burwell.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/18/16.) (In wide release.)

### 45 Years

The talent and charisma of Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay aren't deployed but milked in the writer and

director Andrew Haigh's portentous drama of a marriage in crisis. They play Kate and Geoff Mercer, a refined and hearty bourgeois couple in rural England who are about to celebrate their forty-fifth wedding anniversary. A week before the party, Geoff gets a letter from the Swiss authorities about a former girlfriend named Katya, who died there in an accident in 1962. But Kate soon learns that Geoff—whom she hadn't met at that time—has been keeping the details of that relationship, and the depth of his commitment to the deceased, a secret from her. The story of sudden and corrosive distrust appears simple and straightforward, but Haigh seems to have built it backward, delivering only enough information to lead relentlessly to its foreordained conclusion. His airtight script is matched by sluggish direction that leaves Rampling and Courtenay with little to do but look earnest and troubled. Haigh makes his intentions so obvious—and makes his actors display them so blatantly—that all imagination is foreclosed.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

The director Howard Hawks adds sly sexual insinuation to the blatantly sexual antics of Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell in this scintillating 1953 adaptation of the stage musical based on Anita Loos's novel. Lorelei Lee (Monroe) and Dorothy Shaw (Russell) are showgirls sailing to Paris, where Lorelei, an unabashed gold digger, plans to wed the dorky heir Gus Esmond (Tommy Noonan, in a role meant for Cary Grant). But Esmond's disapproving family plants the virile private detective Ernie Malone (Elliott Reid) on board to dig up dirt on Lorelei, and the sex-crazed Dorothy falls for him. Meanwhile, Lorelei flirts with a wealthy old goat (Charles Coburn), and legal complications ensue. Hawks's whiplash-wicked comic set pieces display his classic themes of gender swaps and repressed desires, and Monroe's inflections and expressions have a deliciously clever and sharply experienced irony. Jack Cole's choreography offers some of the most incisively swinging musical numbers ever filmed, notably the strenuously geometric "Ain't There Anyone Here for Love?," featuring Russell and the entire male Olympic team.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Jan. 27 and Feb. 1.)

### The Lady in the Van

This gently comic drama is based on the true story of the writer Alan Bennett's uneasy relationship with Margaret Fairchild, a homeless woman who lived in a van parked in his driveway in London for almost fifteen years. Nonetheless, the forced and maudlin whimsy of Nicholas Hytner's direction leaches the tale of the grit of experience and trivializes the characters' stifled passions. Maggie Smith plays Fairchild, a former concert pianist and

former nun who has changed her name to Mary Shepherd and ekes out a squalid living from her vehicle, which she parks in front of a series of houses in Camden Town, ending up at Bennett's. The writer is portrayed by Alex Jennings in a clever double role (done with effects) as the writer who writes and the writer who lives, and the elderly woman becomes a major presence for both of them. The movie flattens Margaret's long and complex life by turning Mary's latter-day travails into a handful of remarks and plot points; it reduces the grand presence of two superb actors to cuteness.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

### Louisiana Story

Two kinds of romantic American mythology—the can-do spirit of American industry and the beauty and folk wisdom of an unspoiled frontier—collide in Robert Flaherty's fascinating, awkward, luminous documentary-style drama, originally released in 1948, about drillers seeking oil in a Cajun family's bayou. The hero (Joseph Boudreaux) is like Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer rolled into one, yet, unlike Huck, he doesn't have to "light out for the territories": in the swampy clime he calls home, he's already beyond the reach of mainstream civilization. He befriends the oil rig's driller and boiler man, and tries to fuse modernity and magic, sprinkling the same mystic salt over the derrick that he uses to hook the biggest catfish these men have ever seen. Standard Oil funded the movie, and headlines proclaiming the oilmen's skill at limiting collateral damage rouse snickers in contemporary audiences. Still, the movie is a powerful, swooning visualization of a wilderness childhood. Virgil Thomson's Pulitzer Prize-winning score puts impressionistic shimmers and dancing twists on rural themes; whenever the boy navigates the bayou in his pirogue, the evocative melodies merge seductively with Flaherty's infatuated imagery.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 30.)

### A Perfect Day

The action in Fernando León de Aranoa's film is set many wars ago, in the Balkans, in 1995. A pair of grizzled aid workers, Mambrú (Benicio Del Toro) and B (Tim Robbins), struggle to complete basic tasks for the good of the local population; anything grander or more noble, we sense, would be viewed as impractical and dumb. A corpse must be hauled out of a well before the water is spoiled, but the simple purchase of strong rope becomes an ordeal, and dead cows keep being laid across the roads, with land mines beside them. Unsurprisingly, the story develops an absurdist streak, and the two stars work up a nice routine of grim and fatalistic humor; it's when the plot turns away from them, toward the idealistic anger of a young colleague (Mélanie Thierry), or to

Mambrú's awkward dealings with a former lover (Olga Kurylenko), that the drama slackens. The film may be scattershot and odd, but it needs to be odder still. Anyone noting the title and hoping for Lou Reed should be warned: he doesn't figure until the closing credits, and even then he doesn't sing what you'd expect.—*A.L.* (1/18/16) (In limited release.)

### Raising Arizona

This broad farce is no big deal, but it has a cornpone-surreal quality and a rambunctious charm. It's about baby love—about people who feel they can't live without an infant to cuddle. When Edwina, or Ed—played by Holly Hunter—discovers she can't have a child, she's a wreck until she hears about male quintuplets that have been born to a woman who took fertility drugs; then she torments her husband, Hi (Nicolas Cage), until he goes to steal one of them. As soon as Hi plunks a quint into her arms, she yowls, "I love him so much!" Hi and Ed live in a yellow mobile home in a Tempe, Arizona, trailer park at the edge of a Pop Art version of the desert. Everything in the film is warped and flipped out; the light seems fluorescent, as if the world were a twenty-four-hour supermarket. Joel and Ethan Coen, who did the writing together (Joel directed), have a knack for hick-suburban dialogue (it's backed up by banjos and, sometimes, a yodeler). And the film is storyboarded like a comic strip; it has a galumphing tempo.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Jan. 30 and Feb. 2.)

### The Revenant

In the eighteen-twenties, a band of fur hunters is attacked by American Indians in the wooded wilds around the Missouri River. A few survivors start the long journey back to camp, first by boat (where the air of twitching vulnerability recalls that of "Apocalypse Now") and then on foot. One of them, Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio), is mauled by a bear and left for dead. Alone, he continues his pilgrimage—eating raw meat and fish, tumbling through rapids, and, for want of accommodation, sleeping inside a dead horse. The sequence of hardships is so extreme and so unrelenting as to verge on the comical, but DiCaprio tamps down any hint of levity, as does the director, Alejandro González Iñárritu. Though Iñárritu's eye is as restless as it was in his last movie, "Birdman," the mood is chastened, and the merry-go-round has made way for a punishing regime. We are given gestures toward a plot: Glass is devoted to his son, Hawk (Forrest Goodluck), and beset by a growling nemesis (Tom Hardy), who is almost as bearish as the bear. Such figures only compound the bitter mood, while a more promising character, a youth by the name of Bridger (played by the excellent Will Poulter), falls

away. The cinematography, often radiant, and as crisp as ice, is by Emmanuel Lubezki.—*A.L.* (1/4/16) (In wide release.)

### Son of Saul

The first feature film by László Nemes confronts a subject that many people would prefer not to think about, let alone to cast in dramatic form. In death camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Sonderkommando were teams of prisoners who were forced to deal with other prisoners as they arrived—herding them into the gas chambers, sorting through their discarded clothes, and ferrying their bodies to the furnaces. A movie that staged all this in detail would not be watchable, or even defensible; what Nemes does, therefore, is to focus on one such assistant, a Hungarian Jew named Saul Ausländer (Géza Röhrig), whom we see in almost every shot. The film shows not the horror of the events around him but his reaction to them; his dark stare does the work on our behalf. There is a plot here—two separate plots, in fact, which might be thought excessive, although they crystallize the fervor and the despair of the inmates. First, there is an uprising and a breakout, against formidable odds. Second, Saul recognizes, among the dead, his own son, and much of the movie is driven by his quest for a rabbi to say the mourner's Kaddish for the child. Somehow, Nemes finds a balance: his exhausting movie pays its respects but also burns with rage.—*A.L.* (In limited release.)

### 13 Hours

Despite the spin doctors' work, Michael Bay's bluntly energetic drama of the 2012 attacks on two American compounds in Benghazi is resolutely apolitical. The action—and there's little but action—is narrowly focussed on the courage of six private security contractors, ex-military men who defy the C.I.A. bureau chief they were protecting and attempt to rescue Ambassador Christopher Stevens from his besieged and insufficiently secure headquarters. Finding that base in ruins, they return to the secret C.I.A. stronghold and, under heavy fire and grossly outnumbered, manage to hold it fast and guide all but two of its employees to safety. The movie's main villain is the bureau chief, known here only as Bob (David Costabile), whose by-the-book misjudgment veers toward cowardice; there are also some Keystone Cops-like bureaucratic stumbles, in the military's delayed response and in the obliviousness of corporate executives who put their security detail in danger. Bay delivers the story with crude melodramatic thrusts; his main interest is the fraternal bonding of male warriors whose mutual devotion equals their patriotism. With John Krasinski and James Badge Dale.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

## THE THEATRE



"Slut," performed by the Arts Effect All-Girl Theatre Company, returns to Dixon Place after a U.S. tour.

## GIRL POWER

*An activist theatre company looks at the sexual politics of teen-agers.*

IN 2007, THE THEATRE ARTISTS and activists Katie Cappiello and Meg McNerney founded the Arts Effect All-Girl Theatre Company. There, the directors provided a forum for teen-age girls, where they could make socially relevant art. In 2012, a banner year for the Arts Effect, girls from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania joined Cappiello and McNerney to talk about their lives, including such topics as what they were studying and what their dating life was like. In the course of these informal interviews, Cappiello and McNerney noticed that one word kept coming up. The girls, wrote the directors, in their introduction to the Feminist Press publication of their play "Slut," determined that "the word slut served as the barometer of female sexuality—the measurement of female status and self worth." "Slut," then, could be either a badge of honor or a gross put-down, part of the world of hurting, complicated words that inform young women's lives, a phenomenon that is analyzed in the book with insight and compassion, by feminists such as Leora Tanenbaum and Jennifer Baumgardner.

But theatre is different. To bring the issues to life, Cappiello needed to write a story that had narrative drive. She devised the tale of Joey Del Marco, a sixteen-year-old badass who is relatively free in her power and loves her female friends. One imagines that Joey speaks in the lower register, unafraid of owning her voice, defying the female socialization—putting a relationship before oneself—that Carol Gilligan reported on in her groundbreaking 1982 study, "In a Different Voice." Still, Joey's independence must be punished. One evening, at a friend's party, she's raped by a group of guys. What follows that tragedy is the old, sick non-question: Was Joey asking for it?

Cappiello has an ear for how teen-agers talk—their voices both loud and soft, formed and barely formed—and notices the ways in which girls can seek solace with one another, a habit that society at large rarely misses an opportunity to vilify. Gathering a group of young performers onstage to tell Joey's story adds another layer of complexity. After a tour of U.S. cities, the play returns to Dixon Place (on Thursdays and Saturdays Jan. 28-Feb. 27), featuring such young stars as Lexa Krebs, as Joey, and Zora Casebere. Cappiello's tribe of girls know their bodies, the better to tell us something about ourselves.

—Hilton Als



## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### Buried Child

The New Group revives Sam Shepard's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama from 1978, directed by Scott Elliott and featuring Ed Harris and Amy Madigan as a rural Illinois couple with a family secret. Previews begin Feb. 2. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### The Grand Paradise

In this immersive work devised by Third Rail Projects, audiences are transported to a disco-era tropical resort that claims to house the Fountain of Youth. Previews begin Jan. 28. Opens Jan. 30. (383 Troutman St., Brooklyn. 718-374-5196.)

### The Humans

Stephen Karam's disquieting family drama moves to Broadway with its original cast, including Reed Birney and Jayne Houdyshell. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

### I and You

Lauren Gunderson's play, directed by Sean Daniels, follows a pair of teenagers collaborating on a school project about Walt Whitman. Opens Jan. 27. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

### Labapalooza!

St. Ann's Puppet Lab presents its annual festival of experimental puppetry, with works covering everything from Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray's friendship to the adventures of a tiny dot. Jan. 28-31. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

### Mike Birbiglia:

#### Thank God for Jokes

The comedian and monologist ("Sleep-walk with Me") performs a new solo show, about the dangers of going too far with humor. Seth Barrish directs. Previews begin Feb. 2. (Lynn Redgrave Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 866-811-4111.)

### O, Earth

The Foundry Theatre presents a play by Casey Llewellyn, which touches on transgender politics, gay pop culture, and Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." In previews. Opens Jan. 31. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

### Prodigal Son

Manhattan Theatre Club premieres a play written and directed by John Patrick Shanley, about a teen-age boy from the Bronx who transfers to a private school in New Hampshire; the cast includes Robert Sean Leonard. In previews. (City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### Sense & Sensibility

Bedlam revives its minimalist staging of the Jane Austen novel, adapted by Kate Hamill and directed by Eric Tucker. In previews. (Gym at Judson, 243 Thompson St. 866-811-4111.)

### Smart People

Kenny Leon directs Lydia R. Di-amond's play, which follows four Harvard intellectuals on the eve of the 2008 Presidential election. In previews. (Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

### Sojourners

In Mfoniso Udofia's play, directed by Ed Sylvanus Iskandar, a Nigerian immigrant longs to return to Africa, while her husband is seduced by the American dream. In previews. Opens Jan. 28. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### Utility

The Amoralists stage Emily Schwend's play, directed by Jay Stull, about a woman who is overwhelmed by her two jobs and three children. Previews begin Jan. 28. Opens Feb. 1. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

### Washer/Dryer

Ma-Yi Theatre Company presents a farce by Nandita Shenoy, directed by Benjamin Kamine, about a Manhattan couple who have just eloped in Las Vegas. In previews. Opens Feb. 2. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

### Women Without Men

The Mint stages Hazel Ellis's little-known play from 1938, set in the teachers' lounge of an Irish girls' school and performed by an all-female cast. Jenn Thompson directs. Previews begin Jan. 30. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

## NOW PLAYING

### LongYarn

A roundabout parable of the redeeming power of imagination, this new piece by the venturesome Brooklyn troupe Banana Bag & Bodice begins with tall tales of maternal cows, crack pipes, prizefighting, and piracy, and finishes with an extraterrestrial flourish. In a squalid semi-swamp, Mother, a statuesque crone—she looms immobile on a pedestal that looks a bit like a drippy candle—with an unsteady grip on reality and a penchant for monologue, waxes fantastical about her checkered life story, spooling out anecdotes and pungent neologisms. Meanwhile, from a more prosaic living room upstairs, her two quarrelsome sons provide periodic reality checks. At times, the twee-ness gets slathered on a little thick, and you may weary of the untethered fabulating, but the finale repays your attention, at once celebrating theatre's world-making power and hinting at darker uses for fictionalized histories. (The Bushwick Starr, 207 Starr St., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111.)

### Maurice Hines: Tappin' Thru Life

In this blithe celebration of nearly seven decades spent shuffling, scuffling, riffing, and rippling, the song-and-dance man tells his life story through dance

routines and jazz standards. Hines (brother of Gregory) is a fiercely affable raconteur and, as backed by the all-female Diva Jazz Orchestra, a suave singer. To spend an hour or so with him, under Jeff Calhoun's direction, is to board an express powered by charm and softshoe. At seventy-two, Hines can still manage that neat physiological trick of keeping his upper body perfectly still even as his legs and feet blur in flurries of movement. But too much of the show is a series of dropped names, less a biography than an energetic résumé. There's not nearly enough tap, and what Hines and a couple of young subordinates do provide is often obscured by the heads of spectators in the first few rows. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Our Mother's Brief Affair

Even the quietest life conceals its share of secrets and lies. In Richard Greenberg's new play (directed by Lynne Meadow for Manhattan Theatre Club), an aging materfamilias disguises a minor betrayal with imagined proximity to a larger one, hoping to dignify small-scale lapses with world-historical significance. But the plot is almost incidental, an alibi for the piece's droll character studies. Anchored by a teasing, acerbic performance from Linda Lavin as Anna, the overbearing mother figure—she keeps her striving children trapped in her orbit by alternately disclosing confidences and withholding affection—the play revels in intergenerational tsuris. The neurotic jibing and jockeying is as delicious and quintessentially Jewish New York as a Barney Greengrass bagel sandwich. But the play's final revelations, when they arrive, aren't as satisfying. Anna's true transgression is both too small and too large; you're left feeling that the play's elegant contrivance teeters on unsteady foundations. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

### A Ride on the Irish Cream

The performance artist Erin Markey has laser-beam eyes, a gigantic voice, and a gift for non sequiturs ("Does my butt look like two greasy cheeseburgers on a skewer?"), which she delivers with penetrating self-possession. In her new show, she plays a young Michigan girl named Reagan, whose family buys a pontoon boat. By the rules of childhood fantasy, the boat is also a horse (charmingly played by the trans actor Becca Blackwell), which becomes Reagan's imaginary friend and erotic love interest. But the plot makes as much literal sense as Mad Libs. What drives the piece is Markey's intimate dream logic and her tender, weird chemistry with Blackwell. Their scenes—existing in the nebulous space between juvenile play and sexual awakening—are punctuated by lovely, harmonious rock songs, which Markey sings with a four-piece band and the occasional chorus line. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101.)

## ALSO NOTABLE ALLEGIANCE

Longacre

**AN AMERICAN IN PARIS**  
Palace

**THE BURIAL AT THEBES**  
DR2

**CHINA DOLL**  
Schoenfeld. Through Jan. 31.

**THE COLOR PURPLE**  
Jacobs

**THE CURIOUS INCIDENT  
OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-  
TIME**  
Ethel Barrymore

**FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**  
Broadway Theatre

**FINDING NEVERLAND**  
Lunt-Fontanne

**FUN HOME**  
Circle in the Square

**THE GLORY OF THE WORLD**  
BAM's Harvey Theatre

**HAMILTON**  
Richard Rodgers

**HASAN MINHAJ:  
HOMECOMING KING**  
Cherry Lane. Through Jan. 30.

**IN QUIETNESS**  
Walkerspace. Through Jan. 30.

**THE KING AND I**  
Vivian Beaumont

**KING CHARLES III**  
Music Box. Through Jan. 31.

**MATILDA THE MUSICAL**  
Shubert

**MISERY**  
Broadhurst

**MOTHERSTRUCK!**  
Lynn Redgrave Theatre.  
Through Jan. 29.

**NOISES OFF**  
American Airlines Theatre

**OLD HATS**  
Pershing Square Signature  
Center

**ON YOUR FEET!**  
Marquis

**SCHOOL OF ROCK**  
Winter Garden

**SKELETON CREW**  
Atlantic Stage 2

**SLEEP NO MORE**  
McKittrick Hotel

**SOMETHING ROTTEN!**  
St. James

**A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE**  
Lyceum



# DANCE

## New York City Ballet

In the past decade, since Christopher Wheeldon and Alexei Ratmansky took an interest in story ballets, the genre has been gaining ground. Now a member of the younger generation of ballet choreographers, Justin Peck, is taking a stab at the form. (This is his tenth ballet for N.Y.C.B. and his first to use a story as its basis.) His source is "The Most Incredible Thing," by Hans Christian Andersen, about a young man who creates a clock that produces lifelike figures who act out various scenes, from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the Seven Deadly Sins. The commissioned score is by Bryce Dessner (a composer for "The Revenant"), and the set and costume designs are by the Brooklyn-based artist Marcel Dzama. The one-act ballet is part of a mixed bill that also includes Wheeldon's lively "Estancia," from 2010. • Jan. 27 at 7:30 and Jan. 29 at 8: "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Glass Pieces." • Jan. 28 at 7:30, Jan. 30 at 2, and Jan. 31 at

3: "Barber Violin Concerto," "Fancy Free," and "Who Cares?" • Jan. 30 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Sonatine," "Mozartiana," and "Symphony in C." • Feb. 2 at 7:30: "Polaris," "The Blue of Distance," "Common Ground," "The Most Incredible Thing," and "Estancia." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Feb. 28.)

## Parsons Dance

David Parsons and his crew of indefatigable, eager-to-please dancers return for their annual run at the Joyce. "Finding Center," a New York premiere by Parsons, takes its title and backdrop projections from a series of pastels, by the artist Rita Blitt, of ovals and circles, shapes that have previously inspired ingenuity in the choreographer. "Almah," a world premiere by the former company member Katarzyna Skarpetowska, juxtaposes memories of her Eastern European childhood with those of her adolescence in New York City. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 27-31.)

## Will Rawls / "I make me [sic]"

Rawls, a multidisciplinary performance artist and writer concerned with issues of memory and identity, presents a forty-five-minute solo in a gallery at PS1. The piece will be a meditation in words, sound, and movement, touching on "incompletely remembered moments" from Rawls's personal history, and, through them, the inconsistency of memory and the notion of the self. (MOMA PS1, 22-25 Jackson Ave., Long Island City. 718-784-2084. Jan. 28-29.)

## Trisha Brown Dance Company

Since Brown announced her retirement, in 2012, the future of her company and repertory have been uncertain. After the "Proscenium Works" tour that is now ending, the troupe is planning to downsize, and to concentrate on the unconventional venues of Brown's early years. That means this BAM program may be your last chance to see two masterpieces on the scale of stage for which they were created: "Set and Reset," from 1983, with its Robert Rauschenberg projections and cool currents of motion playing on edges, and "Newark (Niweorce)," a darker, denser, more austere piece, from 1987. Catch them while you can. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Jan. 28-30.)

## Vim Vigor Dance Company

The young choreographer Shannon Gillen likes to flesh out big themes with ferocious movement: dancers colliding and grappling and tossing one another end over end. Gillen's "Separati" follows five characters, tracing connections between the past and a darkly imagined future. Her company is one of the first to try out the new three-hundred-seat Gelsey Kirkland Arts Center, formerly home to St. Ann's Warehouse. (GK Arts Center, 29 Jay St., Brooklyn. 212-600-0047. Jan. 28-30.)

## "Angel Reapers"

The Shakers, a small religious community known for its ecstatic prayer meetings, may be almost extinct (the group insists on celibacy), but it continues to fascinate artists and particularly, it seems, choreographers. Like Sufi spinning, Shaker songs and the repetitive movements that they inspire are meant to bring worshippers closer to the divine. "Angel Reapers," a collaboration between the playwright Alfred Uhry and the choreographer-director Martha Clarke, uses Shaker rhythms to create a musical and physical portrait of the group, evoking worship, erotic longing, and spiritual turmoil. The work, a hybrid of theatre and dance, premiered in 2010. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. Feb. 2. Through March 13.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND

## Books:

### The Art of Books That Aren't

Mindell Dubansky, a book conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, exhibits her collection of books—objects that look like books but aren't—at this American bibliophile society. Since the nineteenth century, designers have produced a myriad of flat-printed objects that feign the three dimensions of a bound book: menus, advertisements, invitations, greeting cards, pamphlets, and more. Dubansky proposes that the motif lends a sense of permanence and significance to these items, which she's gathered from across the country. Gag books, sold in novelty shops in the nineteen-thirties, forties, and fifties, play up the visual pun: "Crime Does Not Pay," a fictional author named Dusty Evsky warns on the cover of a mock crime novel, before the flip, which features a woman wearing only a brassiere: "But Every Hold

Up Is Not a Crime!" (The Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. 212-838-6690. Jan. 28-Mar. 12.)

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

More art works from the trove of the late Sotheby's chairman A. Alfred Taubman go under the gavel at the house, as part of a week devoted to Old Masters (Jan. 27-30). The Taubman sale, on Jan. 27, includes a Gainsborough—a portrait of a young boy dressed in pale-blue iridescent silk and lace, titled "The Blue Page"—and a view of the Grand Canal, by Bernardo Bellotto. An evening sale on Jan. 28 is led by a large and striking canvas by Gentileschi, depicting a scene from Ovid's Metamorphoses: the alluring Danaë, half naked, cavorting on a bed with Cupid as a shower of gold coins falls from the sky. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • On Jan. 27, Christie's holds a single sale of Old Masters devoted to drawings,

including works by Tiepolo, Van de Velde, and Watteau. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

### "Pat & Jamie's New York"

NY1's morning-news duo Pat Kiernan and Jamie Stelter hold the third installment of their comedic talk series, in which they invite Manhattanites, disgruntled or otherwise, to discuss all the things they love and hate about New York. The hour-long program includes special guests, man-on-the-street interviews, and live music by the evening's musical director, Leslie Goshko. This week's talk features city natives with no shortage of quips: the Beastie Boys' Adam (Ad Rock) Horovitz; Leandra Medine, of the blog Man Repeller; and the far from sophomoric teen-age writer and comedian Ruby Karp. (92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. 212-415-5500. Jan. 28 at 8:15.)

## Brooklyn by the Book

The Nobel Prize-winner Toni Morrison's latest novel, "God Help the Child," takes on youth, trauma, femininity, and colorism as starkly as her most famous works. The book is Morrison's first to be set in a contemporary period, but the author mythologizes with a weight that recalls her Depression-era debut, "The Bluest Eye." In the new novel, a child called Bride is born to a neglectful mother, Sweetness, who is repulsed by Bride's complexion. The emotional scars that Bride bears soon twist into a physically regressive, supernatural transformation that defines her wandering adulthood. Morrison, like the acerbic characters she crafts, still refuses to soften or pacify. She discusses her work as part of this literary series. (Congregation Beth Elohim, 274 Garfield Pl., Brooklyn. 718-768-3814. Feb. 2 at 7:30.)





## TABLES FOR TWO

# VAUCLUSE

100 E. 63rd St. (646-869-2300)

**WHEN ARTISTS ARGUE WITH CRITICS**, wise men and women seek shelter. Pete Wells, the *Times*' estimable restaurant reviewer, not long ago went after Vaucluse, the new brasserie from the Altamarea group (Marea, Ai Fiori), whose C.E.O. then responded angrily, and in public. We look to criticism not for truth but as a sort of gladiatorial contest, even a bullfight, with the reviewer in his suit of lights goading the poor creative animal. When the bull writes a letter of protest to the local paper, we don't know which way to look.

What, then, does a late arriver to the combat make, fair-mindedly, of Vaucluse? Certainly, with its double-sized rooms and satisfied murmur, it perfectly invokes the Upper East Side: not your parents' Le Cirque-style U.E.S. of boastful big money but the new, ripened U.E.S., where everyone has been locked in place now for a long time and all know, wistfully, that the really cool places are far, far away, across the East River.

The lighting, perhaps for that reason, is the kindest, not to say the loveliest, of any restaurant in New York. In one room, hanging linen drums cast an illumination soft and diffuse but not dim—perfect for having a conversation about, say, a Sotheby's auction or the kids' tuition. With lighting this beautiful, one might almost be ready to eat badly. In truth, one eats very well, if one's expectations are geared to the kind of place that Vaucluse is trying to be; as much as Balthazar is a Balzar-style brasserie with elephantiasis, Vaucluse is an outsize copy of the luxe bistros of the Seventh Arrondissement in Paris (D'Chez Eux is an instance)—comfortable, reassuring, and consistently delicious without being at all daring.

The starters include a lobster rémoulade—the apple and celery crisp and tart, the seafood sweet. The veal Rossini is a triumph, with a nicely undercooked veal mignon and just enough richness from the little slice of pan-seared foie gras—and just enough mystery from the minced black truffle—to make it work, in a way that the original tournedos version no longer quite does. A plate of striped bass has today's inevitable Brussels sprouts but also a surprising European crunch of hazelnuts. Desserts are more variable: a good chocolate mousse has too much nubble and grubble going on in and around it to be entirely satisfying, while a lemon tart with a cookie crust is a flat-out failure.

That finest of all critics, John Updike, said once, of reviewing authors, "Do not blame him for not achieving what he did not attempt." Vaucluse, luxurious if not imaginative, delicious if not distinctive, achieves all it seems to attempt, which is to add a humane (and expensive) retreat to what has become something of a restaurant desert in this quaint, old, forgotten neighborhood.

—Adam Gopnik

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# FOOD & DRINK

## BAR TAB GARFUNKEL'S

67 Clinton St. (212-529-6999)

A Lower East Side bar where you don't have to fight to get in—or be heard—is nothing short of a miracle. Garfunkel's, a cozy new speakeasy, goes one step further. At its best—when you're curled into a high-backed chair sipping a Quill (a richer and more bitter Negroni, thanks to Punt e Mes) and listening to Nina Simone's velvet tones—Garfunkel's is the most intimate bar in New York City. To enter, ring the buzzer marked "G," climb to the second floor, and let the bartender usher you into his candle-lit living room. On a recent winter evening, the only guests were a first-time patron busy falling in love with a TNT—a spicy tamarind take on a margarita—and Esmerelda, the owner's girlfriend, sitting barefoot on a couch in the corner of the library. Ivo Diaz, the beverage director, assured the first-timer that the bar was usually busier, and that entrance would eventually require a pass code to unlock a specially designed bank-vault door. The patron tried her best to ignore the inevitability of change, taking another sip of her TNT and daydreaming of bringing a bathrobe. Esmerelda's phone rang. Yes, she was hungry, but she couldn't bear to break the spell. "I'm already comfortable over here. I don't want to move." Amen.

—Becky Cooper



# Irving Penn

## Personal Work

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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS OUT

Theodore Roosevelt was a Rough Rider, a barrel-chested outdoorsman who loved the “manly sports” that brought out the rude, uncomplaining vigor of American youth. “I do not feel any particular sympathy,” he said, in 1903, “for the person who gets battered about a good deal so long as it is not fatal.” When it came to football, Roosevelt’s motto was “Hit the line hard.” Donald J. Trump is more of a soft-palmed indoorsman, but he would clearly like to join T.R. on Mt. Machismo someday. It was no doubt in that spirit that he reacted so derisively to the umbrage that followed an N.F.L. playoff game this month, in which Vontaze Burfict, an excitable linebacker for the Cincinnati Bengals, exchanged his team’s near-sure chance to win for the even more immediate pleasure of trying to decapitate Antonio Brown, a wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

At a rally in Reno, Trump defended Burfict against the moralists who moaned foul. “Football has become soft, like our country has become soft,” Trump said. He longed for the days of Ray Nitschke, Lawrence Taylor, Dick Butkus, and other warriors of the pigskin past: “You used to see these tackles, and it was incredible to watch, right?” Two weeks before the game, Brown, for his part, had taken a group of high-school players to see “Concussion,” the anti-N.F.L. film starring Will Smith, now at a theatre near you.

Since the nineteen-sixties, football has been the most popular American sport, and the Super Bowl is the most highly rated television program of the year. And, for all of football’s violence, what postwar President has dared to question it? Dwight Eisenhower played at West Point and injured his knee tackling Jim Thorpe. Gerald Ford entertained offers from the Lions and the Packers before settling on Yale Law School. Ronald Reagan was a real-life guard for the Eureka College

Golden Tornadoes and a make-believe halfback in “Knut Rockne: All American.” Hunter S. Thompson considered Richard Nixon a weirdo and a crook, but he warmed to him when he discovered that the President was a “god-damn stone fanatic on every facet of pro football.”

Yet there is a streak of official reformism when it comes to football. It began with T.R. The *Chicago Tribune* called the season of 1905 a “death harvest.” The game, with its battering-ram formations and minimal equipment, saw nineteen deaths, a hundred and thirty-seven serious injuries, and countless broken bones. The administrators at Northwestern, Columbia, and Duke dumped the sport, Stanford switched to rugby, and Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard, declared that football was “more brutalizing than prizefighting, cockfighting, or bullfighting.” Roosevelt, fearing that Eliot would “emasculate” the game, if not ban it, summoned officials from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to the White House, and implored them to find ways of ratcheting back the carnage or risk the end of football. The next year, college officials outlawed the most punishing formations, instituted the forward pass, and created a “neutral zone” between the defense and the offense.

But, as the players grew bigger and faster, as the incentives to “take out” an opposing player grew with the financial rewards, the T.R.-era reforms and subsequent tweaks to the rules and the equipment failed to keep up. In 1994, Paul Tagliabue, the league commissioner, dismissed widespread reports about debilitating head injuries as a “pack-journalism issue.” His successor, Roger Goodell, faced with overwhelming evidence of the toll on players, acts with the stealthy instincts of a coal-company executive charged with keeping terrible secrets.

The N.F.L.’s leverage against reform



is not limited to its fantastically profitable deals with the networks and the advertisers. The game itself is undeniably alluring. At its best, football is a uniquely American spectacle: fast, brutal, complex, colorful, and have we mentioned brutal? Trump's entire political talent is to tease out the most dubious instincts of his listeners—their rage at the threatening Other or, in this case, their bloodlust. And he makes a point: to watch Lawrence Taylor, the great Giants linebacker, swat away a pair of blockers, spin past a third, and then demolish the quarterback was thrilling—just as it was thrilling to see Muhammad Ali exhaust, bewitch, and finally level George Foreman, in Zaire.

But the modern football fan in possession of a conscience and a reasonable knowledge of the horrific statistics about injuries suffered by players comes to resemble a nacho-scarfing version of St. Augustine, who, faced with his own lust, addresses God: “Lord, let me be pure . . . but not yet.” Precisely. Let’s confront the crisis in football . . . but not yet. It’s kickoff! Two seasons ago, Barack Obama, while watching an N.F.L. game on Air Force One, responded to a question about the sport with an Augustinian dodge. “I would not let my son play pro football,” he said, adding quickly, “There’s a little bit of *carveat emptor*. These guys, they know what they’re doing. They know what they’re buying into. It is no longer a secret. It’s sort of the feeling I have about smokers, you know?”

When parents don’t want their kids to play a sport anymore—which largely became the case with boxing—that sport either dies or shifts to the margins. And yet it is hard to imagine football losing its place in the culture anytime

soon, when the ratings for games, college and pro, are so high, and when so many young people—not least young African-Americans and rural whites—continue to play. Friday-night lights still shine bright across Texas. But it’s notable that some of the game’s toughest customers won’t let their kids near the gridiron. Not long ago, Mike Ditka, a legendary tight end and coach for the Chicago Bears, told Bryant Gumbel, of HBO, that he wouldn’t let a son of his play. “I wouldn’t, and my whole life was football,” Ditka said.

In fact, while the N.F.L. takes half-measures and pressures its critics, the better to safeguard its gold mine, each day brings another player who challenges our fandom. Last week, it was Antwaan Randle El, a brilliant all-around player for the Steelers, who told a reporter for the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* that he has trouble walking down stairs and that, though he’s only thirty-six, his memory is failing. “I ask my wife things over and over again, and she’s, like, ‘I just told you that.’”

Randle El is just one of many players to point out that the violent nature of the game—the focus of our guilty pleasure—is the same thing that breaks spines, shatters bones, renders middle-aged men demented. “I love the game,” he said. “But I tell parents you can have the right helmet, the perfect pads on, and still end up with a paraplegic kid.” Ultimately, there may not be an adequate reform. It may come down to living with the pain (the pain of others) or learning to love the artistry of Serena and LeBron even more than we already do.

—David Remnick

## TELECOM DEPT. ONLY CONNECT



With the Iowa caucuses looming, Presidential hopefuls who have already inundated the e-mail inboxes of voters—the “spray and pray” technique, in P.R. parlance—may want to rethink their strategy. In the home stretch, campaign volunteers might benefit from a refresher course in the lost art of picking up the phone. At 9 A.M. one recent Friday, in a conference room fifteen floors above Third Avenue in midtown, a group of aspiring (apolitical) cold-callers convened. They had each paid \$199.99 to attend a Telephone Prospecting Boot Camp led by David Fischer, who owns a Sandler Training sales-instruction franchise.

Fischer, who is forty-three and brawny, has been in business for three

years. “Prior to that, I worked for seventeen years at Pfizer,” he said. “The way we sold was just so arrogant. We’d walk in and say, ‘Dr. Grubb, let me tell you why you should write Lipitor for your patients.’” Sales, he said, is “maybe the reason I was put on this Earth.”

“Have you done this before?” a financial adviser named Cindy asked a woman to her left.

“Yeah. It’s *awesome*,” the woman replied. Her name was Lisa; she owns a fitness company and was sipping a Hail to the Kale juice. “You think, *three hours* . . . But it goes by like—” She snapped her fingers.

Fischer, who wore khakis, a checked shirt, and a Fitbit, turned from the whiteboard on which he’d been writing. “For those of you who are on Twitter, this is my handle. I follow back, as the kids say.” (Sample tweet: “#Amateurs sit and wait for #inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” —Stephen King.) He began his spiel: “I made my first cold call about twenty-two years ago; I made

my last call on Tuesday. And, I can tell you, every time I pick up the phone there’s still that little chill that goes up my spine. It’s rife with rejection, and there are a lot of people out there who are not doing it right.”

Fischer diagrammed the Sandler Success Triangle: Technique (“great scripts, great tactics”), Attitude (“mind-set and belief”), Behavior (“If you don’t set a plan for a targeted number of dials, you won’t make the dials”). In the middle, he wrote, “SUCCESS.”

“I want you to think about cold-calling as a holistic approach,” he said. “This is a marathon and this is a contact sport. The more contacts you make the more successful you’ll be.”

Jan, a former actress who coaches executives in public speaking, said, “I feel like I’m bothering people. I don’t like getting cold calls!”

“In my household, we hung up on cold-callers all the time,” Fischer admitted. “And my mother, who’s a devout Catholic, she’d say, ‘You can hang up





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on cold-callers and still go to Heaven!” He led the group in a fill-in-the-blank exercise: “I hate it when a caller . . .”

“I hate the prerecorded calls,” David, a Scot who owns an I.T. franchise in Tribeca, said. “When they can’t even be bothered to speak to you.”

“Or when they sound like they’re reading from a script,” Ilya, a real-estate broker who makes a hundred cold calls a day, added. “They make me feel like I’m just a number.”

“Also, sometimes they try to make a stupid joke,” Cindy said, rolling her eyes.

Fischer said, “Tonality is key. You should have a very warm and nurturing type of tonality. Use emotional words—people *buy* emotionally. They justify the decision intellectually.” He added, “Don’t beg—like, ‘If you’ll *just allow me* a minute.’ Make these conversations as adult-to-adult as possible.”

He asked the class, “What is your goal when you’re making a call?”

“I want to improve their day,” Ilya said.

“Get a meeting,” David said.

Fischer interrupted. “I’m going to absolve you right now of a lot of pressure. Your whole goal making a dial is simply to have a conversation. If you get into ‘I need, I want,’ remember that this has nothing to do with us.” He role-played a call to a tough customer, with a legal recruiter named Valerie. *Ring, ring.* “Hi, Valerie, this is Dave Fischer, from Sandler Training, looking for some help.”

Valerie, harshly: “Is this a sales call?”

Fischer: “I might say, ‘It is. I’m

shaking, I’m nervous, my palms are sweating, and you can probably sense it and you probably want to hang up.’ Whatever’s your style. And I recognize that there’s a group of people who, no matter what, if I call with the winning lotto numbers, they don’t want to hear from me.” He shrugged and asked, “Anyone want to take a guess what this means? ‘S.W. . . S.W. . . S.W., N!’”

Ilya: “So what. So what. So what, no!”

Jan: “So what. So what. So what, nailed it!”

With a smile, Fischer explained: “Some will. Some won’t. So what, next!”

—Emma Allen

## VISITING DIGNITARIES SNACKISH



One chilly morning last week, at a Pret a Manger on the edge of Union Square, the Roca brothers came in from the cold. They were visiting New York on a twenty-four-hour furlough from El Celler de Can Roca, their dining establishment in northeast Spain, which, according to the World’s 50 Best Restaurants, a list issued annually by *Restaurant* magazine, is currently the best on the planet. Joan (head chef), Josep (sommelier), and Jordi (desserts) were dressed in dark parkas that did not look quite up to the weather. The plan had been to visit the Greenmarket across the street, but they were

hesitating. “It’s cold in Spain this time of year,” Jordi said, nibbling nonjudgmentally on a Pret croissant. “But not like this.”

The Rocas were in town for a ceremony at which they would be appointed Goodwill Ambassadors for the United Nations Development Programme. They love to travel, Joan explained, to find inspiration and to study “the migratory movement of food.” The problem, Josep added, is that they don’t like to leave the restaurant, where the twenty-nine-dish Feast Menu, with wine pairings, costs nearly three hundred dollars. “It doesn’t feel right unless at least one or two of us is there.” So they shut it down for five weeks each summer and travel, with their kitchen staff, to interesting culinary destinations—Lima, Istanbul, Miami. “When we went to Turkey, there’s a technique that’s very ancient to make cotton candy,” Jordi said. He borrowed it to devise a dessert using Catalan sheep’s milk. “The milk looks like the wool of the sheep.”

Josep cut in: “Our alchemist—we have an alchemist—he has even included the smell of the wool of the sheep.”

How, exactly? “It’s an extraction,” Josep said, a little cryptically. “You distill it.”

The brothers employ an unorthodox roster of specialists. “We have a biochemist, an agricultural engineer, a botanical biologist,” Josep explained. A psychologist visits the restaurant once a week “to take care of the emotions of our team.”

When the brothers are in New York, they like to visit the city’s temples of high cuisine: Eleven Madison Park (No. 5 on the 50 Best list), Le Bernardin (No. 18), Blue Hill at Stone Barns (No. 49). They also love Per Se (No. 40), notwithstanding a recent withering appraisal in the *Times*, which called into question the value proposition of the thousand-dollar meal. “In New York, everybody is living at such a fast pace,” Joan ventured diplomatically. “Maybe it’s a luxury to be able to spend three hours eating.”

As Goodwill Ambassadors, the Rocas will be promoting the U.N.’s sustainable-development goals. They see no contradiction between this mandate and running a restaurant where a staff of seventy caters to fifty diners who have booked a year in advance. The



*“I’ll be a little late. I’m on a Citi Plow.”*



restaurant is situated on the outskirts of the medieval city of Girona, Joan pointed out, a short walk from the modest café, owned by their parents, where the brothers learned to cook. Their cuisine may be élitist, but their origins are not. “We grew up in the kitchen,” he said, noting that the neighborhood is working class, a home to immigrants. The brothers have had offers to open restaurants in Shanghai, Abu Dhabi, and Las Vegas, but they opt instead to focus on the single restaurant, trying to invest the place with “truth” and “authenticity.”

“The energy at the restaurant is more important than the fine dining itself,” Joan said. “Otherwise, it’s just luxury.”

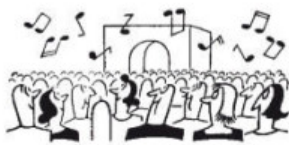
The brothers have described their cuisine as “techno-emotional,” combining formal innovations with a dose of nostalgia, in order to conjure a feeling or a memory with a single bite. “Jordi is working on a project with NASA,” Joan noted. On a recent trip to Houston, the brothers visited the space center and discussed the limitations of food in space. “The idea is to make a little snack,” Jordi explained. He has been experimenting with a special freeze-drying technique, and thinking about how to encapsulate everything that an astronaut might miss. Deer shank, say. “It’s Earth, distilled,” he said.

Having finished their coffee, the brothers bundled up and forged across the street to the Greenmarket. Joan and Josep admired a table full of nubby local potatoes, and at another stand inspected an ostrich egg. Jordi wandered over to a guy in a Carhartt jacket who was selling jars of honey out of the back of his van. “I actually keep bees here in New York City, on rooftops,” the man said, pulling out photographs of one of his hives. “This is Eighty-fifth and Columbus,” he said, before adding, ruefully, that the hive in question is no longer there. “It was stolen.” Jordi’s eyes widened. “Somebody came from another roof and stole the whole hive, full of honey.” These were not ordinary thieves, the honey man explained. “They were well-versed beekeepers.”

Delighted by this story of how the migratory movement of food happens in New York, Jordi chuckled, and then went to rejoin his brothers.

—Patrick Radden Keefe

## DOWNTIME AN O.K. DAY IN HARLEM



When Derek Trucks, the guitar wizard, was in the Allman Brothers Band, and they were playing one of their perennial stands at the Beacon Theatre, on the Upper West Side, he always walked to the gigs, sometimes with long cigar detours through Central Park.

“Gotta walk off the night before,” Trucks said recently. He and his wife, the singer Susan Tedeschi, were walking east on 133rd Street, up from the Hudson into Harlem and a frosty headwind. There’d been no night-before this time, save for sushi and sake downtown, but they wanted to poke around the neighborhood, in anticipation of an engagement at the Apollo Theatre this week with their own group, the Tedeschi Trucks Band.

“I remember the first time I came up here, like twenty years ago,” Trucks said. “Yonrico Scott, the drummer in my old band, he’s from Detroit and is an awesome, crazy individual. He played football under Bear Bryant. His mom is a hairdresser and gospel singer in Detroit, used to do little Stevie Wonder’s hair. Anyway, Rico was wearing dashikis and was super Afrocentric. He was, like, ‘Young brother, you can’t go up to Harlem by yourself. No, you’re coming with me. We’re gonna go get a bean pie.’ I still have this book that I bought on the street that time. It was where I learned about the reptilian race, all the super-kooky alien-conspiracy stuff.”

Trucks is thirty-six, with a ponytail, a bushy blond beard, and a beatific air. He had on maroon corduroys, an oilskin jacket, and an indigo wool cap. Tedeschi, forty-five, blond, with a mischievous grin, was in jeans, peacoat, and prescription Ray-Bans—looks like Boston, sings like Memphis. Their two kids, eleven and thirteen, were at home, in Jacksonville.

Tedeschi met Trucks in 1999, when her band was touring with the Allmans and Trucks was still too young to buy beer. She described acting cranky during a sound check, while Trucks, to her mortification, looked on. “Then I re-

member walking up the steps behind the stage, and I felt someone grab my leg. I look down, and it’s Derek. I was, like, ‘What are you doing?’” She glanced over at him. “You were frisky,” she said. Her bandmates didn’t love the idea of her seeing him. “They were, like, ‘You can’t hang out on that bus, with the Allman Brothers.’” “Why not?” “Because they do drugs!”

“I didn’t have to win over her parents,” Trucks said. “I had to win over her band.”

The street dead-ended at City College, so they cut across it, then bushwhacked down through a dilapidated park to St. Nicholas Avenue, where 133rd Street began again—the Swing Street leg. They ducked into a juice bar



*Susan Tedeschi and Derek Trucks*

with a “NO OBSCENE LANGUAGE” sign on the door.

“Where you all from?” the proprietor asked.

“Jacksonville,” Tedeschi said. “We’re playing the Apollo on January 26th.”

“Congratulations!”

They ordered vegetable juice and bean soup, and went outside to sit on a stoop and bat around anecdotes about their heroes—most of whom one or both had played with. Hubert Sumlin, B. B. King, Solomon Burke, Wayne Shorter, Willie Nelson, Levon Helm. “Usually, the greats are really humble and sweet,” Trucks said. “It’s the mediocre-to-a-little-better-than-good, or the people who are kind of bullshit, who are the assholes.”

“B.B. treated me like a granddaughter,” Tedeschi said. “For a long time, he didn’t want to meet Derek, because he knew an old boyfriend of mine who

didn't treat me right. He didn't trust any guitar-player dudes. But then he finally met Derek and got to hear him play and said, 'Now I know why you wanna marry him. I wanna marry him!'"

When Tedeschi was ten, she was an understudy in the Broadway production of "Annie." "During the auditions, I was staying at the New York Hilton hotel with my grandmother," she said. "The Bee Gees were staying there. I was running through the revolving doors to tell my grandma that the Bee Gees were coming, and I ran into this dude, all dressed in black, and he was, like, 'Slow down, little lady. Where you going in such a hurry?' And I was, like, 'The Bee Gees are coming!' He said, 'You like them?' I said, 'They're O.K. They're singers, and I'm a singer.' And he said, 'Well, I'm a singer, too. Maybe we'll get to play together someday.' Afterward, all these people ran over to me and said, 'What did Johnny Cash say?'"

In 2012, Tedeschi and Trucks performed at the White House, in a tribute to Etta James. "We'd met the President a handful of times, to the point where he recognized us, but he'd never seen Sue sing or me play," Trucks said. "I made it a point to look down at his face when she first stepped up to the mike and started singing, and you could see his surprise—he was not expecting that."

—Nick Paumgarten

## DEPT. OF HOOPLA KITCHEN SINK



The hundredth anniversary of the readymade, Marcel Duchamp's name for the common manufactured objects that he converted into works of art by choosing and inscribing them, was celebrated on January 15th at the Museum of Modern Art. About forty invited guests met in a gallery of paintings by Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, and other contemporaries, where they were outnumbered by swarms of uninvited visitors—it was Free Friday, with no admission charge after 4 P.M. Ann Temkin, the museum's chief curator of painting and sculpture, welcomed

everyone in her brief remarks. Standing near Duchamp's bicycle wheel mounted on a kitchen stool ("Bicycle Wheel"), and under his snow shovel hanging from a wire ("In Advance of the Broken Arm"), Temkin recalled the letter that Duchamp had written from New York in mid-January, 1916, to his sister Suzanne, in Paris, describing these endlessly subversive art works and identifying them, for



the first time, with the English word "readymades." Duchamp told her to go to his old studio, on the Rue Saint-Hippolyte, where she would find a galvanized-iron bottle rack; he wanted her to paint a title on the bottom in silver-white paint, and to sign it ("d'après) Marcel Duchamp," thereby creating an original readymade at a distance. The title he wanted her to paint is missing from the letter, and afterward Duchamp couldn't remember what it was, but in any case Suzanne couldn't do what he asked. She had already cleaned out the studio and thrown away everything in it, including the bottle rack.

The celebrants at MOMA included Duchamp descendants, family friends, artists, art historians, and Duchampians of all ages. After Temkin spoke, she rounded them up and led the way to a room on the floor below. Champagne was served, and there was a large cake from Empire Cake, in Chelsea, with a replica of "Bicycle Wheel" in beige and silver frosting. Francis M. Naumann, whose many books on Duchamp include a volume of his letters, talked about discovering the 1916 letter from the artist to his sister. Suzanne had married Jean Crotti, an artist friend of Duchamp's, and some of their descendants had moved to the U.S. Naumann's search for Du-

champ's letters led him to Alice Buckles Brown, a grand-niece of the Crottis, who lived in Piedmont, California, and was described to him as being "a little strange." Naumann went to see her, and she brought out a bunch of letters for him to look at. "She told me she was going out for twenty minutes, and during that time I read the letter to Suzanne," he said. "You can imagine how I felt, just holding it. When she came back, she said that I could make photocopies of everything. I told her she could give the originals to the Archives of American Art, and get a tax deduction. Not long afterward, I heard that she had mailed them all to the Archives, without an appraisal, in an envelope that was not registered or insured. My impression was that she couldn't have cared less about the tax deduction."

A technician who had been fiddling with a computer-TV hookup called for silence. The screen showed Antoine Monnier, the director of the Association Marcel Duchamp, celebrating the readymade anniversary with a group of people on the roof of the B.H.V. department store, in Paris. B.H.V. stands for Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, where Duchamp bought the bottle rack he asked Suzanne to sign. The store still sells bottle racks, with rows of protruding pegs to hold drying wine bottles, but these days they're plastic. It was close to midnight in Paris, so the store was closed, but its rooftop bar was open to the public.

Thierry de Duve, a philosopher and art historian who lives in New York, came to the MOMA party wearing a distinctly blue sweater—French blue. De Duve believes that the message of the readymade has been misunderstood. "It was decoded to mean that when anything can be art anybody can be an artist," he explained. "But it's the other way around. When anybody can be an artist, *then* anything can be art. I have learned to look on Duchamp as the messenger of a sea change in art. He switched us away from the Beaux-Arts model."


In the letter to Suzanne, Duchamp added (in French), "Don't tear your hair out trying to understand this in the Romantic or Impressionist or Cubist sense—it has nothing to do with all that."

—Calvin Tomkins





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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

## TIME IS A GHOST

*Vijay Iyer's jazz vision.*

BY ALEC WILKINSON

Vijay Iyer's music can be jubilant and dramatic, but Iyer is not. He tends to stand slightly farther from someone he is speaking with than people usually do. Seated, he sometimes leans back from an engagement, as if the extra room allowed him more time to reach a judgment. His gaze is examining, and he occasionally looks

take him for an accountant, he says.

Lately, Iyer, who is forty-four and a Harvard professor, has been the most lauded piano player in jazz. Reviewing Iyer's record "Break Stuff," his twentieth, released last February, the critic Steve Greenlee wrote, "He may be the most celebrated *musician* in jazz." Iyer appreciates the sentiment, but it makes

a series of accidents." The observation that one hears often about Iyer, and that is not usually made about a musician whose career is twenty years old, is that he hasn't yet achieved his potential. A strain of traditional authority appears to have withheld its approval, however. He considers it significant that he has never been invited to play at the Village Vanguard, for example. The history of jazz has white musicians and black musicians, but it doesn't have brown ones, he said. Iyer is Indian-American. His surname is Raghunathan; he changed it to Iyer after college, at Yale, where he majored in mathematics and physics.

Iyer is currently the Metropolitan Museum of Art's artist-in-residence,



*"No one ever told me not to do anything on the piano," Iyer says. "So I always thought of my progress as a series of accidents."*

at people askance, which makes him appear skeptical. In conversation, he seems cautious but precise and quietly determined. He stands with his feet spread and his knees locked, like someone in the military. He has a round, handsome face and a sharp nose. His expression is not fixed, but it doesn't vary a lot. People usually

him uncomfortable, too. "I have never thought of myself as a great pianist," he told me. "I thought of putting myself in the service of some larger trajectory. For me, every choice is to take us closer to the next choice. I never had formal training and no one ever told me not to do anything on the piano, so I always thought of my progress as

and in March he will perform during the course of eighteen days at the opening of the Met Breuer, the former home of the Whitney Museum. Iyer's residency was Limor Tomer's idea. Tomer oversees Live Arts at the Met, and she wanted to see "what a deep engagement with the Met's galleries would look like to someone like



Vijay.” For more than a year, Iyer and Tomer have been walking around the museum discussing what he might do. As one of his first events, on an evening last October, he played the pipe organ in the gallery where weapons and armor are displayed. The organ occupies a balcony at one end of the gallery. Iyer arrived a little before six. He hadn’t played a pipe organ before. Someone asked what the program would consist of, and he said, a little uncertainly, “All the hits.”

Iyer pressed several keys. “I’m an expert, because I watched the YouTube video on how to play the pipe organ,” he said. For a few minutes, he held down keys and pulled out stops and pressed a few pedals with his feet; then he stood. “It’s a little like sailing a yacht all by yourself, out there on the ocean, with all there is to take care of,” he said.

Tomer sat on a folding stool to one side of the organ, which was built by Thomas Appleton, a Boston craftsman, in 1830. “It’s the ultimate goyische instrument,” she said. “I love that he’s subverting it. It’s a reverse-colonial moment.”

Iyer was to play two programs, each twenty minutes long, and at six o’clock he placed his phone above the keyboard to keep track of the time. He played a single note, then another, then three together and held them. People began gathering on the floor among the armor and on a balcony at the far end of the gallery. The single-note figures lengthened into phrases and lines and began to swirl and spill over one another and form clusters that resolved periodically but did not come to rest. Iyer played mostly with his eyes closed, opening them only to find a stop.

He ended by holding down several keys, then he walked to the balustrade and waved. “I kept trying to play harder, as if that would make a difference,” he told me. “It’s like trying to turn on a light switch harder, but I can’t get that out of my arms.” For the second piece, he played three works of his own, which seemed more orderly. At the balustrade, he made a small bow.

Two of the first people to approach him were Andrea Morgan and Maria

Castillo, whom he had gone to college with. “You looked very priestly when you bowed,” Castillo said. The three left the museum together to have a drink.

I asked if they had imagined at Yale that Iyer would become the musician that he has. “The idea of a professional jazz career then sounded fictional—even today,” Morgan said.

“It’s a bad idea,” Iyer said.

“I would never recommend it to any young person. We were very practical people.”

“A terrible idea,” Iyer said.

“You always had other stuff you were doing.” This was said in a consoling tone.

Iyer followed his sister, Pratima, to Yale—she is a scientist in Georgia who works in public health. Their parents’ marriage was arranged in India. In the mid-nineteen-sixties, Iyer’s father, Raghu, came to the University of Florida to obtain a doctorate in pharmacology. After a year, his wife, Sita, joined him. “Basically, the door was open to certain kinds of non-Western immigrants, ones with technical training—scientific, or medical,” Iyer said. “Hence all those stereotypes about Asians being doctors and engineers. They were curated by policy.”

Raghu got a job in Albany, New York, where Iyer was born, and then another, when Iyer was two, in Rochester. Iyer’s parents started him on the violin the next year. In high school, he was a member of a regional youth symphony that toured once a year. Pratima took piano lessons, and from as early as Iyer can recall he also “started banging on the piano.” As a teen-ager, he played keyboards in a band covering songs by the Police and Prince. At the end of tenth grade, he auditioned for the school’s jazz ensemble. There was already a piano player, so at first Iyer was assigned the vibraphone. The band director liked his playing but told him that he needed a deeper understanding of the music’s vocabulary. In the library, Iyer found records by Thelonious Monk, and was affected by his “staggering empathy, those pointed voids that he would finish with such a different sense of completeness.”

When Iyer began looking for col-

leges, he didn’t think he was fitted to attend a conservatory. “I was still figuring things out,” he told me. “I didn’t know that I would, or even could, be a musician.” He had skipped seventh grade, so he was sixteen when he arrived at Yale. He auditioned for the college symphony and didn’t get in, and he began to take the violin less seriously. There was a piano in the dining hall, and after dinner he would play it. In his second year, he was accompanied by Jeff Brock, a bass player who is now the chair of the mathematics department at Brown. “People were looking a bit askance—who are these guys playing dinner jazz?—but then we were sort of embraced,” Brock says. Iyer also began writing music, mainly in imitation of Monk and Billy Strayhorn, Ellington’s collaborator, whom he studied in a workshop taught by the musician Willie Ruff. Ruff, who had gone to Yale and was known for playing bass with Dwiki Mitchell in the Mitchell-Ruff duo, remembers Iyer as “quiet and industrious.”

There is permanent music and temporary music. Temporary music remains fixed in its period. Permanent music reflects its period but provokes responses deeper than nostalgia. It is no observation of my own that much of America’s permanent music has been made by African-Americans playing jazz, although “jazz” is a term that many musicians, including Iyer, tend to shun, partly in the belief that it has a commercial taint, as if the music were merely a commodity, and partly in the belief that it has a dismissive taint, as if it stood for music made by untrained musicians who groped their way toward expression. Iyer doesn’t care to have his music labelled at all, but he sometimes calls it “creative music.” Improvisation, whether artistic, social, or cultural, as in the manner of a diaspora, involves “the ability to perceive, think, decide, and act in real time,” he says. For more than ten years, Iyer has also written chamber music, usually for commissions, a process that he describes as “slowed-down improvisation.”

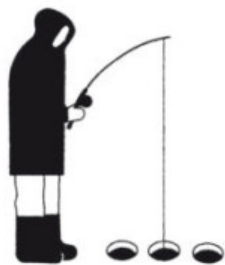
Iyer’s music sounds modern, but he feels that he is embedded in the traditions

of improvised music. As a piano player, he regards his lineage as descending through “James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Randy Weston, Bud Powell, McCoy Tyner, Andrew Hill, Alice Coltrane,” he told me. The drummer Tyshawn Sorey, with whom Iyer has often worked, sees the music they have made together as both historical and contemporary. “It’s not really about the concept of trying to do anything new,” he said. “I think it comes more from the idea of history. We’re dealing with things in our time. What we’re exploring is stuff people have been dealing with for centuries: the mystical and transcendent powers of music.”

Iyer’s main engagement is with the Vijay Iyer Trio, whose other members are Stephan Crump and Marcus Gilmore. Crump plays bass, and Gilmore plays drums. Iyer is interested in “what happens from the shoulders down” among listeners, and he cares more for a musician’s ability to listen intently and for his or her ideas than for what he sometimes calls “the athletic rigor of playing.” Jeff Brock says that Iyer looks less for virtuosos than for musicians whose playing is “intensely personal. He gravitates to musicians who have a certain kind of cry, a howl. He’s trying to rend the fabric of whatever restraints are being placed upon them by the idiom.”

Iyer does not think of Crump and Gilmore as accompanists—the trio has “a non-soloistic way of improvising together,” he said. Onstage, Iyer decides “how to start, how to continue, and how to end, and I’m constantly assessing the shape of the performance—I have a sense of where I’m going and where the other musicians are going to meet me”—but he seeks a group exchange. “Vijay is interested in the collective dynamic,” Crump told me, meaning that he and Gilmore, while carrying out tasks, devise their parts according to what they hear the others playing. Gilmore told me that he approaches the drums from “a harmonic and melodic base.” He likes the examples he finds in

Yoruban and Afro-Cuban music, where, he said, “the drums are melodic, they’re talking, it’s linguistic.” In other trios, the rhythm section might receive a map, in the form of chord changes, that lays out a route to a destination. With Iyer, the musicians might receive a map, but the route is a matter for discussion. “When people ask me what the music sounds like, I just say, ‘I play free,’” Gilmore says.



One morning, I had breakfast with Iyer at the Astor Row Café, in Harlem, near where he lives with his wife, Christina Leslie, a computational biologist, and their ten-year-old daughter. A song began playing, and he said, “That’s Jimmy Smith on the organ. The drummer is Donald Bailey, whom I played with in Oakland when I was in graduate school.”

In 1992, Iyer went to the University of California at Berkeley for a doctorate in physics. He lived in Oakland, across the street from a club called the Bird Kage, where there were jam sessions on Sundays. The Bird Kage’s piano was in disrepair. Iyer brought his own keyboard, and when the bandleader learned that he lived across the street he started paying Iyer forty dollars to bring the keyboard and play in the house band. “Most of the musicians were middle-aged and older African-Americans who cherished that era of music,” Iyer said. “The horn players would play chorus after chorus, and you’d have to accompany all of them. Some of them were great, but, more to the point, among all of them there was a real love of the music.” Bailey came now and then. He asked Iyer to be in his rehearsal band, an octet that he called Eight Misbehavin’, which met at his house, where “we’d really stretch out,” Iyer said.

Iyer was becoming more interested in music and less interested in physics, and in 1994 he gave up physics altogether. He began studying with a professor named David Wessel, who was also a musician. Wessel, who died in 2014, had a computer-music research facility, the Center for

New Music and Audio Technologies. He taught music perception and cognition and computer music. “He was welcoming and generous, and a genius who created opportunities for people to flourish, and he took an immediate interest in me, because I was a bit weird,” Iyer said. With the oversight of a committee that Wessel assembled, Iyer began a Ph.D. based on “the study of how music works, not just how in the abstract but in our bodies. How we do it. How we hear it.” The study, then nascent, is known as embodied cognition. It proposes that the body is involved in thinking, and that the perception of rhythm is itself a form of intelligence.

In entering African-American music “and trying to figure out what my position is and striving for some place within it,” Iyer said, his status “has frequently been called into question. Since childhood, he has been aware of his racial identity—of being, as he has said, neither white nor black, and having a different-sounding name. As an Asian-American, he regards himself as existing “on the boundary of what it means to be American,” he said. He sees himself as someone of color but, as the child of parents who came willingly to the country, as being in a different position from people whose ancestors arrived as captives.

“To be a jazz musician is to express some American project, to be part of American history, to take in those rugged ideals to which improvisation is central,” he said. “Critical writing used to attempt to place me by othering me, by putting me outside the history of jazz. Everything I did was seen as different and not as the continuity of a tradition. Critics never describe black music as rigorous or cerebral or mathematical, although Coltrane was interested in mathematics. Since I was Asian, I was seen as having only my intellect to use.”

In San Francisco, Iyer encountered a group called Asian Improv, whose members “were committed to radical African-American traditions, but they were incorporating instruments from Japan and China, and dealing with



issues of their own,” he said. “It became apparent to me that the history of this music is a history of communities where music was an uplifting force, and that situating myself in relation to that history was what mattered. It wasn’t about me trying to sound black. It was me figuring out my relationship to those histories.”

In California in 1994, Iyer met Steve Coleman, the bandleader and eventual MacArthur Fellow, at Yoshi’s, a club in Oakland. Coleman is a saxophone player and composer, whose complex, exacting music draws on African traditions and on elements of the African diaspora. Iyer, still a student, was unsure about whether to try and be a musician, Coleman told me. “His parents weren’t really in favor of it—they wanted him to stay in the sciences. He was going through this uncertainty over whether he could do this, and I was: ‘You can do whatever you want.’ He started to gain confidence, and we had confidence in him that he could join in.” Iyer says that Coleman’s view is “pleasantly revisionist.”

Coleman invited Iyer to go to Europe with his band. “At the time, I thought of myself as an amateur, and to be invited was a profound turning point for me,” Iyer said. “In his music, there’s a real gravity and rigor, and rhythm is at the center of everything. These are some of the best musicians in the world, I thought, so I better step up. It’s not a hobby anymore. I was in way over my head, and I felt like I was always messing up—I think I had something like impostor syndrome. But seeing what he worked on, how he worked on it, the scope of his knowledge was a tremendous education for me.”

Iyer received his Ph.D. in 1998. His dissertation’s title is “Microstructures of Feel, Macrostructures of Sound: Embodied Cognition in West African and African-American Musics.” At Harvard, among career scholars, he feels a little self-conscious—“my so-called Ph.D.,” he said. “I think of it as a hustle.” Ingrid Monson, a professor of ethnomusicology at Harvard, said, though, that “Vijay’s dissertation was one of the first to talk about embodied cognition. It foreshadowed

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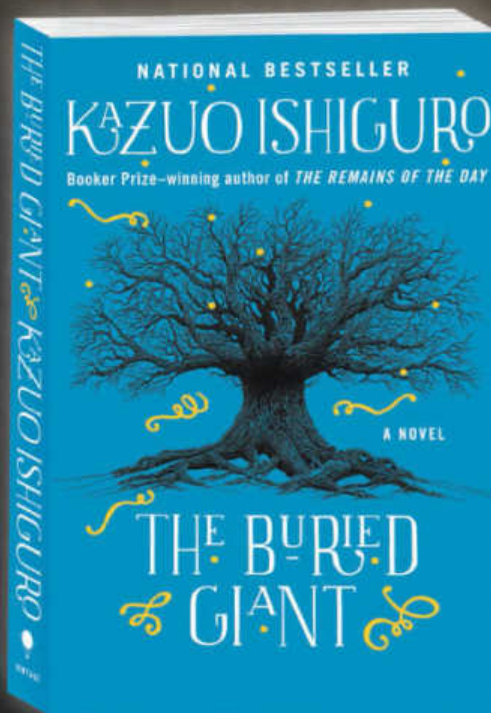
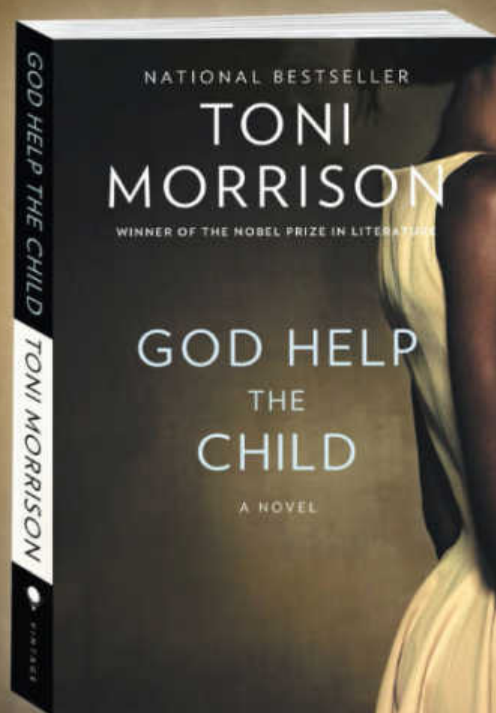
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**VINTAGE**

the development of a now prominent direction in musical studies, called 'embodiment studies.' The field is less interested in scores and musical theory and more in the cognitive and embodied underpinnings of music. Vijay's work was very important, and is frequently cited."

After breakfast, Iyer and I stood on the corner of Lenox Avenue and 130th Street, and I said something trivial about how the sheer richness of things in view seemed hospitable to jazz during the period when New York was its main home, and he said that for him it was instead the nervous rhythm of the city that fed the music. Iyer made two records in California, but he said that when he moved to New York, in 1999, his music changed. "There was an intensification, the rhythms of the city and the street and how that influences you, there was a ratcheting up," he said. Jeff Brock said that when he and Iyer rehearsed "we would play the same piece for an incredibly long time, until it started to feel natural. It was always an extreme experience playing with him, and you were almost exhausted at the end."

"Historicity," made in 2009, brought Iyer more notice than was customary for him. The first, title track, which he wrote, begins with an asymmetrical line in the left hand, and a darting, lithe one in the right. The right hand begins finding the spaces between the left hand's wobbly prog-

ress. While some musicians give the sense that they are offering ideas as they arrive, almost fortuitously, Iyer's ideas seem to come from a wide and deep reserve. He has a gift for narrative, for making a song feel like a procession of suspenseful events. The album's third song is "Galang," a rendition of a dance track by Maya Arulpragasam, who performs as M.I.A. Her version is spare, hypnotic, and urban. Iyer's sounds wildly pagan, as if it took place in a warehouse on the edge of town.

Three things figure prominently in Iyer's music: the acuity of his attention, the coherent template of his improvisations, and his touch on the piano. Improvised collective music is the sound of negotiation, according to George Lewis. Lewis, a MacArthur Fellow, is a composer, a trombone player, a musicologist and writer, and a professor at Columbia. "In any collective improvisation, you hear people staking out positions," he told me one day, in his office. "Sometimes they try to take power, sometimes they advocate for their positions—where the music should go. Other people decline; they make collective decisions through sound alone. You don't have to watch. You can have your eyes closed and hear it. Improvisers listen to the forms, notes, chord structures, and rhythmic cycles that are basically carriers of the fundamental signals. With the great ones, you can dialogue with the music and hear where it's going—what the per-

son's definition of the current situation is, and sometimes possible futures. All of this is audible to Vijay."

Iyer says that while improvising he makes a lot of "micro-decisions," and that each moment involves "a set of potentialities." Sometimes he finds solutions within the range of his right hand, discovering melodies that have a folklike character, and sometimes he spreads his hands to the ends of the keyboard, which is an Ellington gesture.

An Iyer improvisation has a shapelessness that involves holding in mind possible serial forms and evoking them. When I said something like this to him, he said, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Then, "I honestly don't know how a lot of what I do happens." Improvising musicians are often taught to rid their minds of thoughts, which Iyer regards as "an impoverished view of thought." George Lewis said, "I'm suspicious of people who say they blank their minds to play. With Vijay, I think he's looking at the situation and making small tests. He's being careful and deliberative, even in the most ecstatic moments, which I find attractive. The ones who blank their minds, I'm always thinking, How can we get your attention? Someone who can operate like Vijay, on multiple levels of consciousness, that's what I admire."

When Iyer was younger, he thought more consciously about rhythm, and he played with a heavier hand. Then he began to consider "the expressive variation of sound in time, the flow of sensation," he said one evening at dinner. Something Crump thought when he first played with Iyer was that Iyer appeared to "have developed his own language with the piano. The overtones and harmonies, the polarities in the sound, the physicality of the instrument, the unparalleled touch—harnessing the beast that is, and can be, a grand piano."

Jeff Brock told me, "The piano is this almost baroque machine, with mechanical linkages and hammers. It has to be hit strong." Iyer's tone, Crump said, is "extremely powerful, but it's also sensitive and refined. It's not just about getting quieter. It's maintaining a control. There's a ceiling to how loud you can get, but if you engage instead



*"That'll be best if used by 15FEB16."*



at the lower dynamic range you find it's like the ocean, almost infinite."

Iyer's tone has a warmth and a clarity, like that of a singer who enunciates carefully. The notes go by so quickly that it is difficult to distinguish all the technical means at work, but part of the richness comes from the way he uses the pedals. "People treat the pedals as if they were binary—down or up," he said. "But there's a continuum of variation between all on or all off. Half pedal, it's called. Controlling the duration has a lot to do with how you get the instrument to resonate, which then has to do with how different notes relate to each other, which is harmony. So harmony and timbre and other variables, such as time, are related. I kind of knew that, I guess, but I learned how to control it or ride it a little more."

Iyer's left hand occasionally comes halfway to his shoulder, as if recoiling. It is a characteristic gesture. Pianists usually care more about the force with which they bring their hands down. Watching drummers, Iyer learned about release. "A lot of what drummers practice when they're warming up is uptick, or rebound," he said. "On a piano, you can affect the upper edge of the spectrum a bit with the velocity in which you leave, at least on a good piano. On really nice instruments, all these extra variables reveal themselves."

The period of immersion in technical prowess, which is common to musicians of all types, is absent in Iyer's training. Brock noticed earlier in their friendship that "his record collection was enormous. He was doing a lot of listening and thinking about music, without necessarily taking the monastic approach. He decided late to be a musician, but at the same time he knew that, to do that, he was going to have a slightly different narrative. I think what he found is that people are as receptive to somebody speaking in multiple tongues as they are to someone clearly just focussed on the instrument."

In early December, Iyer visited the Met Breuer building, using the entrance on a side street which construction workers use, and produced his driver's license for a security guard. In

the gallery on the first floor, where he will perform, he said, "My home away from home." He wore a trenchcoat over jeans and a shirt, and stood in his soldier stance. He said that he hadn't yet established all that he would do during his residency. "It's not quite like Marina Abramović living in the galleries and staring at people," he said. "But I'm going to be there almost every day, playing."

His practical questions were answered by Kwabena Slaughter, the associate general manager of production and technical operations at the Met, who had come to meet him. Would there be a door to keep the noise made by people in the lobby from interfering? It might be possible to hang a theatrical curtain, Slaughter said. A screen to project images onto? Usually, they were projected onto the wall itself.

Iyer wondered where his musicians should be placed. If they set up flat to the wall, the sound would reverberate.

"Are you going to be loud?" Slaughter asked.

"Some stuff might be more chamber music, and some might be heavier," Iyer said.

A centerpiece of Iyer's tenure at the Met is a suite of improvisatory duets made with the master trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith in response to the drawings of Nasreen Mohamedi, an Indian artist who was born in 1937 and died in 1990. Her drawings of abstract geometric forms are so painstaking that it is as if each line were scored rather than drawn. In the second half of Mohamedi's life, a neurological affliction made her hands tremble. In a journal, she wrote, "Difficult this tremor / I almost faint with exhaustion— / I lie still / It is difficult / Nearly all the time / Within the greatest despair / calm and truth are found."

Mohamedi wrote in a journal, "Music—abstract quality yet real to such a degree that it is almost life." This notion seems threaded through the suite, which has seven pieces and is called "A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke," echoing a phrase from one of Mohamedi's journals. The suite begins with Smith playing a bright, rising phrase, like a herald, that seems to announce

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Photo: Gene Shlavone

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a character's taking the stage. What follows might be a two-figure play in which the exchanges involve mortality or impermanence or divinity. The musicians seem to trade remarks, and sometimes talk along with one another, as if each were reciting a text—a poem or a scripture—which they then consider. Sometimes they appear to reflect on an exchange, and sometimes they brood separately. The discourses are both cultivated and passionate. The occasional sparseness of their playing and the stillness that sometimes surrounds their remarks suggest a region distinct from ordinary existence. The narrative reaches a climax in the sixth and seventh movements, which have the feeling of a leave-taking or a resolution, an acknowledgment that they have said what they wish for the moment to say.

There was no plan for how many movements the suite would include, and there was no score, but it wasn't so much improvised as decided on after months of looking at Mohamedi's drawings and discussing them. Iyer and Smith read Mohamedi's journals as well as two penetrating commentaries on her work, by Geeta Kapur and Roobina Karode, that will be published in the show's catalogue. By the time Smith and Iyer met to record the suite, in November, "there was a certain understanding, a certain set of governing ideas," Iyer said. "It wasn't necessarily about being in complete agreement but in being in conversation about them."

They recorded everything in a day, in a studio in midtown on the far West Side. The album will be released in February. The version they will play at the Met Breuer in March will reproduce the entire suite, but not faithfully.

Iyer became a professor at Harvard in 2012. The music department wanted to hire a classical composer, but it couldn't agree on one. Ingrid Monson encouraged Iyer to apply. "It's always been my dream that we have a prominent jazz artist on the faculty," Monson told me. "I sit at a table at a faculty meeting and can't believe I'm looking at Vijay Iyer."

Iyer usually leaves for Boston early Monday morning on the train, and he

returns Tuesday or Wednesday. He prefers the train to flying, because he can sleep more easily on a train. After two days of committee meetings, teaching—which includes student ensembles and his graduate seminar, called "Theorizing Improvisation," which has readings from sociology, cognitive science, anthropology, and cultural studies—and dealing with brainy kids who have avid minds, he is worn out.

Iyer's office at Harvard occupies a windowless room in the basement of the music building. Along the walls are sliding panels built for Iyer to manage the sound, which might be brittle if left to reflect off the bare walls. There is a piano, a drum set, and two amplifiers. The students, mostly young men, prepare ensemble pieces. A typical ensemble has drums, a bass, a piano, and some combination of guitar, trumpet, saxophone, and possibly a vocalist. Iyer sits in a chair and often closes his eyes while he listens. The less confident students steal glances at him. An ensemble plays, and Iyer says, "It's a little hard to know, as a listener, where to, or how to, distribute my cognitive resources. There's kind of no center. That's O.K. for a while, but hard to sustain." And, "Sometimes, you might want to make a radical choice and drop out for a while. The cliché is you have to build, everyone building in with more notes. If you listen to Monk, there'd be stabs and silences, but that silence was filled with other things. You can build by not building. What that means is you build in the imagination of the listener by actually refusing to build, which arouses an expectation."

One afternoon recently, Iyer met with a doctoral student named Rajna Swaminathan. Swaminathan plays a two-headed drum called the mridangam, which is from southern India. She and Iyer were working on a piece involving a complicated rhythmic pattern that Iyer has been struggling to grasp. The pattern has five parts, each shorter than the one before it. "Generally, in South Indian music we improvise in reductions," Swaminathan said, for my benefit. Iyer said that he had to relearn the pattern every time they played it. Swaminathan sat on the

floor with one leg bent and the drum against her knee, and the other leg forward with the drum against it. They started, and immediately Iyer said, "It's too fast for me; sorry, I can't hang." Swaminathan set a slower tempo. They played for about twenty minutes, with Iyer striking percussive clusters of tones and Swaminathan slowly increasing the tempo. When they finished, Iyer said, perhaps disingenuously, "I'm not doing anything but re-orchestrating the same parts." Swaminathan said, "What if you turned it into something more like a melody?"

It was near the end of Iyer's second day, and he sat at the piano rubbing his eyes like a tired child. That night, he had dinner with a group of students as their guest, at a restaurant in Harvard Square. The train he caught arrived in Penn Station at two-thirty in the morning. Somewhere outside Providence, at around ten-thirty, he talked about a discussion in class which had involved the psychologist J. J. Gibson.

"Gibson advanced what he called an ecological approach to perception and cognition," Iyer said. "It's not that we just hear sounds. We hear the sources of the sound, and we've evolved to identify them. He also talks about time and events. There's an article called 'Events Are Perceivable but Time Is Not.' We experience this tumult of events, and time is a ghost of what we actually experience. What we call time is really the feeling of eventfulness, so this kind of makes music a matter of events and our perception of those events. Music is made of us listening to each other." I nodded, and he leaned his head against the window and closed his eyes. ♦

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*From a statement by the Toronto Transit Authority, reported in 24 Hours Toronto.*

"There was some miscommunication between three operators—the operator who was driving spoke to an operator on the street who believed that that operator was going to be taking over his bus, the operator he spoke to misunderstood he was taking another bus.

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# N.Y.C. TO L.A. TO N.Y.C. TO L.A., AD INFINITUM

BY CIROCCO DUNLAP



When I realized that New York was a cesspit filled with the viscera of broken dreams, I decided that the time had come for me to move to beautiful, sunny Los Angeles.

When I arrived in L.A. and realized that it was creatively dead, had a withered husk for a soul, and considered *ombré* the height of culture, I took the first plane back to New York.

Of course, my plane landed in a sea of overstressed, overworked rat kings fornicating with cockroaches and three of my exes. So I bought a used Prius and drove cross-country straight to L.A., because in L.A. people go on hikes.

On my first hike in L.A., I had to talk to someone who'd never read Joan Didion and who'd had—get this—plastic surgery. Before he could say “juice cleanse,” I had ridden a fixed-gear bicycle right back to the Big Apple.

My bike wouldn't fit in my two-inch-wide urine-soaked apartment in Sunset Park, so I found someone to take over my lease and I rode a Segway all the way to Hollywood, eating local fruits and reciting positive affirmations as I rolled merrily along.

At my first party in Los Angeles, I heard the word “agent” more than fifteen thousand times. (I tried to keep a tally, but my fingers started bleeding, so I stopped.) People went on “generals” and never returned. I knew I needed to get back to where the real people were, the people of substance and letters, who understood the Struggle.

So I took the secret subway train that goes from L.A. to New York. It

was O.K. until 3:30 P.M., when a gang of youths attacked me, emotionally. Somehow I arrived in one piece, but it was the middle of winter, so I sat alone in my apartment until spring. During that time, my hair fell out and my skin fell off.

I hitchhiked to L.A. at the first opportunity. When I arrived, the people were sun-kissed and the rampant depression was barely noticeable compared with New York. You can hide all manner of mental illness with a solid tan and veneers. I hopped in my car, got on the 405, and headed to the beach. I was stuck in traffic for six years.

By the time I got back to New York, I was very old. I was twenty-seven. I was too old for the constant partying I assumed people did. I was too old to keep pretending I'd read all the articles and listened to all the bands. Pretending to like things was a young person's game. I just needed a change.

And L.A., city of vapid angels, provided that change. No one cared if I'd read anything or listened to anything, or whether I even had eyes or ears, as long as I didn't get the part of Surprised Waitress No. 2 over them. Everything was fine until all the yoga made my bones dissolve.

Skinless and boneless, I jiggled back to New York, but everyone kept making me feel so ashamed of being a blob. I threw on my comfiest sweatpants, poured what was left of me into a Vitamix, and shipped myself to L.A.

Halfway between New York and L.A., I imploded. I am so much happier now. ♦



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LETTER FROM HAITI

## AFTERSHOCKS

*Is the earthquake-stricken country's flamboyant President a savior or a rogue?*

BY JON LEE ANDERSON



*Before Michel Martelly was the President, he was Sweet Micky, a popular singer.*

A few months ago, a crowd of curious onlookers gathered on a newly built highway overpass in downtown Port-au-Prince. It was a humid afternoon, too hot to linger outside, but Haiti's President, Michel Martelly, was scheduled to appear, and any appearance by Martelly was bound to be entertaining. Before being elected President, in 2011, Martelly was Sweet Micky, an extroverted

singer of the ebullient dance music called *konpa*. A popular and bawdy showman, he appears in one typical video clip in a night club, dancing for the camera in a red bra and a yellow sarong. At one point, he feigns masturbating a giant phallus, then hoists an imaginary breast and licks it.

At the overpass, jeeploads of riot police fanned out, and workmen set up a red carpet and a lectern with the Pres-

idential seal on it. Martelly was coming to inaugurate the Delmas Viaduct, a four-lane bridge over a deep gully at the base of Delmas, a densely populated hillside neighborhood. As the crowd grew, a *rara* band, a squad of dreadlocked teen-agers, showed up to blow horns and beat drums. Martelly, who is fifty-four, arrived in a pink-and-white checked shirt worn untucked over black jeans. His shaved head gleaming, he cut a casually hip figure amid an entourage of plainclothes bodyguards and officials in suits. At the microphone, he spoke in guttural Creole, a French patois that is Haiti's primary language. "This viaduct proves once again that together we can achieve great and beautiful things," he said. "More than a dream, more than a project, this viaduct is now one of the symbols of Port-au-Prince."

Martelly's Presidency has been predicated on rebuilding. He took office a year after the January, 2010, earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, killing perhaps two hundred thousand people and leaving millions homeless. The disaster drew the world's attention to Haiti's long struggle—and, to some extent, offered a chance for a fresh start. In a survey of American voters, more than half reported donating to help repair the country; Bill Clinton, whose family foundation is deeply involved in Haiti, announced the hope that it could "build back better." But Delmas, like much of Port-au-Prince, has been at best partly repaired. Even as the new overpass was unveiled, tens of thousands of residents were still displaced. As Martelly finishes his term in office, Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Some sixty per cent of its ten million citizens live in poverty. Nearly half are illiterate, and only one in four has access to a toilet.

On the road below the overpass, a stage had been set up. It was the final day of campaigning for forthcoming elections, and Martelly was throwing a concert to give one last push to his political organization, the Tèt Kale (Bald Head) Party. Several thousand young people had gathered before a police cordon, and for five hours, as bands came and left, Martelly served as the master of ceremonies. From the stage, he encouraged his officials to get loose and have a good time. The minister of



public works, Jacques Rousseau, danced with increasing abandon; finally, in homage to his boss, he pulled down one side of his shirt to lick an imaginary breast. As the crowd warmed up, Martelly crouched on the edge of the stage, growling into the microphone. “You want me to take off my pants?” he said. “I know that’s why you’ve come. You want me to?” As people yelled “*Ouil!*,” he laughed, turned his back, and gave an insouciant waggle.

It is not unusual for a politician to be a showman, but Martelly’s survival has depended on managing his audiences with exceptional adroitness. A member of the country’s light-skinned elite, he has been repeatedly accused of enriching himself in office. Opponents claim that he has consorted with kidnappers, murderers, and drug dealers, and that members of his family are corrupt. Martelly has blithely carried on, alternating between his Presidential duties and appearances as Sweet Micky. The United States has offered steady support, interrupted by an occasional scolding for his worst scandals.

In public, Martelly still urges his citizens to make Haiti a place of progress and prosperity—a message of self-reliance that is both an acknowledgment that the world has stopped caring and a defense of his administration’s failings. In Delmas, he told the audience, “All I ever hear is that Haiti is a dump, Haiti is corrupt, and Haitians can’t do anything for themselves. But we are doing some things for ourselves!” As the crowd shouted in agreement, he said, “Haiti is a country with a few rich people and a lot of others who live in the shit.” He pointed up toward the hills around town, where the wealthy live, and where his house is situated. “I could be with them,” he said. “But I am not. I am here, with the Haiti that lives in the shit.”

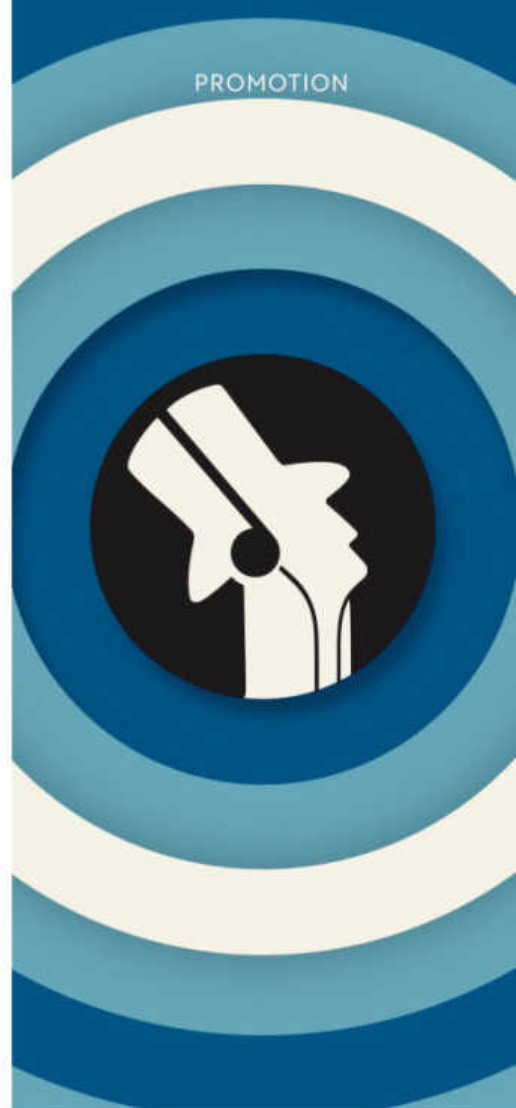
**I**n “The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster,” the journalist Jonathan M. Katz writes, “It’s not that politicians in Haiti are more venal, petty or brutal than elsewhere; it’s just that, too often, that’s all there is to them.” Haiti’s political life has always been volatile. In 1971, François Duvalier, known as Papa Doc, died in office after four-

teen years of brutal rule. His son, Jean-Claude, or Baby Doc, succeeded him; he was only nineteen, but parliament had accommodated him by lowering the minimum age for high office. In 1986, amid growing unrest, a popular uprising forced Baby Doc into exile. Haiti’s long dictatorship was over, but the following decades were plagued by repression, corruption, and political violence. In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide—a charismatic priest from the slums with socialist leanings—became President, and his administration was twice interrupted by coups. The U.S. invaded in 1994, hoping to enforce stability, and ten years later the U.N. sent in peacekeeping troops.

After Secretary of State Hillary Clinton heard the news of the earthquake, she exclaimed, “Why Haiti?” An earthquake seemed like a gratuitous insult to a place that had already suffered so much. When I visited, in the immediate aftermath, there were foreigners at work everywhere: U.S. military planes flying in emergency supplies; U.N. peacekeepers patrolling in armored personnel carriers; teams from Israel, Cuba, France, and a dozen other countries, distributing food and providing medical care. At a clinic set up in a neighborhood school, I watched American doctors amputate groggy patients’ injured feet and hands, tossing them into plastic buckets. At the city’s main hospital, Bill Clinton strolled past the injured, smiling broadly, with the CNN doctor Sanjay Gupta at his side.

Yet all this well-intentioned activity barely diminished the tragedy. Victims lay trapped under rubble, and survivors walked wordlessly around the shattered capital, looking for food and water, or for help rescuing their loved ones or burying their dead. Prisoners who had escaped from the damaged National Penitentiary roamed the city center, and police executed suspected criminals in broad daylight. Less than a hundred yards from the gate of a primary U.N. depot, I saw the body of a man who had been tied to a pole and beaten to death for wandering into the wrong encampment of displaced people. As the country struggled to rebuild, cholera broke out, eventually infecting some seven hundred thousand Haitians. It was traced to a contingent of U.N. peacekeepers

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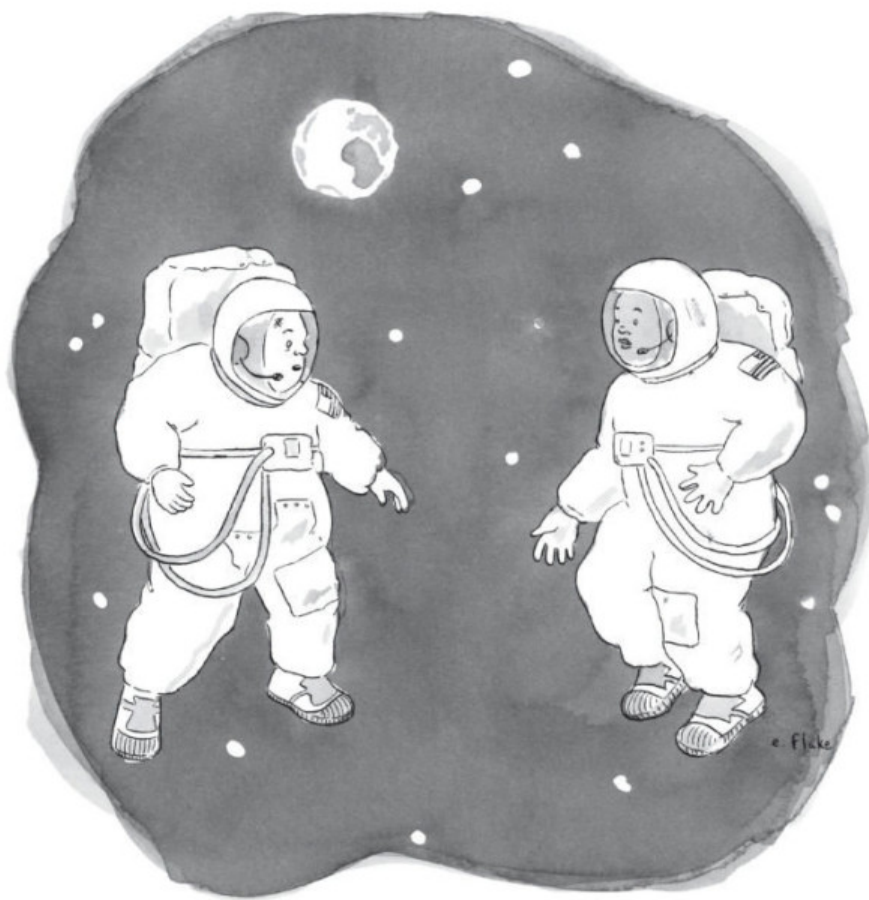
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from Nepal. The Haitians themselves seemed more than ever reduced to passive onlookers. When I asked René Prével, the President at the time, about the response, he told me that the earthquake wasn't his fault.

When Martelly decided to run for President, he was a political novice, but the earthquake provided an opportunity. The country's institutions, and the international community on which they depended, had disappointed Haiti in every conceivable way. Martelly was a celebrity, whose music appealed to Haitians of all political viewpoints. And, as a pro-business populist, he represented a break from nearly two decades of leftist politics. Martelly had famously opposed Aristide; in one widely disseminated video, he pithily threatened to "kill Aristide and stick a dick up his ass." He was an advocate of entrepreneurship, with a slogan, "Haiti Is Open for Business," that seemed optimistic to the point of magical thinking.

The actor Sean Penn, who managed a camp in Port-au-Prince for Haitians displaced by the earthquake, told me about meeting Martelly during the campaign. One night, there was a shooting incident between Martelly's followers and U.N. peacekeepers, and protests spilled into the streets. As the violence threatened to spread, Penn worried that it would interrupt shipments of medical supplies. Shortly before midnight, he went to see Martelly, driving through streets where angry young men stood at barricades, burning tires. "When we got to Martelly's house, all of his advisers were there, and he was in a back room," he said. "Then Martelly emerged, and he was very casual. I must have seemed like a white surfer dude from California, an actor boy who may or may not have been doing some good things for his country. I told him that he had to get his people to stand down, and he exploded. He shouted, 'You motherfuck-

ers! You think you're doing so much. Well, this is democracy! Give me liberty or give me cholera!' When he said that, I was pretty impressed."

Haitian elections often proceed in two stages: a first round and then a runoff between the top two candidates. In the initial round, Martelly came in third, behind Jude Célestin, Préval's favored successor. Martelly charged fraud, and thousands of his followers swarmed the streets. The Organization of American States, which was monitoring the vote, held a partial recount, and determined that Martelly had come in second. (The O.A.S. diplomat who oversaw the recount, Colin Granderson, told me that a huge number of votes cast for Célestin turned out to be fraudulent.) In January, 2011, Hillary Clinton flew to Port-au-Prince to underscore the U.S. government's support for the decision. In the runoff, Martelly won the Presidency, with sixty-seven per cent of the vote. However he had won, it seemed clear to most people in Haiti that Martelly was the man the Americans wanted.

When I returned to Port-au-Prince recently, the streets were mostly clear of rubble, but some of it was merely hidden behind construction barriers. There was a new police headquarters and a new Supreme Court building, and the tents were gone from the public parks; thousands of displaced people had been forcibly removed and left to fend for themselves. Yet the downtown remained battered. Once a grand commercial district with colonnaded streets, it is now a motley open-air market, where vendors set up stalls amid cracked, precarious buildings.

The Presidential palace collapsed in the earthquake, so Martelly keeps his office in the former security headquarters: a white, two-story complex where, decades ago, Papa Doc's thugs tortured people. One morning, Martelly met me there, wearing black slacks and a sharp yellow guayabera with large black buttons. His aides had set up an impromptu television studio—a camera and a Haitian flag as a backdrop—but Martelly waved dismissively at it and said, "Don't worry about all this, man. Ask me anything; I'll answer any questions you have."

Martelly's bluntness has been a signature. In public, he often urges Haitians



to take charge of their own destiny, in a way that can evoke Bill Cosby in his patrician pre-scandal guise. “When I drive to work, I see young guys drinking beer and smoking joints on the street,” he chided the audience at Delmas. “Is that any way to fix the country?” In his office, he told me, “The fact that sixty to seventy per cent of Haitians don’t read isn’t the fault of the Americans or the Chinese. It’s our own bad governance.”

In Martelly’s view, it was this kind of uncensored talk, not any wrongdoing, that fed the allegations his opponents made. At a political rally a few weeks before my visit, a woman had heckled him about the government’s inability to provide her neighborhood with regular electricity. Martelly fired back in Creole, calling her a “whore” and saying, “If you want to fuck, grab any big dude in the crowd and go over the wall. If it’s me you want, I’ll do it with you right here on the podium.” When other Haitian politicians voiced disapproval, a senior Martelly aide claimed that the comment, although recorded and widely rebroadcast, had been doctored. Furthermore, the President had said not “whore” (*bouzen*) but “cousin” (*kouzen*). A couple of days later, three cabinet members, including the minister of women’s affairs, resigned in protest.

Martelly told me, “Sometimes I say something crazy to say something good. For instance, a woman might come to me and say, ‘I have eight kids, and I want help.’ I say to her, ‘Why are you coming to me? The state didn’t sleep with you!’ And the word I use might be a little...” Martelly made a risqué expression. “But it’s serious, too!”

He insisted that he had a uniquely Haitian way of doing things. “My style is my style, and people try to criticize me for it, but I don’t mind,” he said. “As a matter of fact, that’s probably why people voted for me. And that’s why, at the end of my term, I am probably the only person in the country who people fight to come and see.”

When I asked what his achievements were, he looked momentarily at a loss, then ventured, “Definitely education—free education for all. And also removing people from the tents. People were living freely, having kids, not paying for elec-

tricity. We put a stop to that.” The education program, like much else in Martelly’s term, has been controversial. He funded it with hundreds of millions of dollars raised from Haiti’s diaspora, by levying a small tax on money transfers and international phone calls. Some critics allege mismanagement and corruption; others argue that the scheme has mostly benefitted the private sector, which runs eighty per cent of Haiti’s schools. Martelly acknowledges the problems, but points out that attendance has increased, especially among preschoolers.

His claims to self-determination have a special appeal in Haiti, where many normal governmental functions are handled by N.G.O.s funded from abroad, leaving officials with little agency. The country has also endured a long-running military intervention that is unique in the Americas. In the nineties, Aristide, with U.S. encouragement, disbanded Haiti’s Army, known as a corrupt agent of political repression; it was effectively replaced by the U.N. troops who arrived in 2004, and who are still patrolling the streets. Martelly has long insisted that reviving the Army would provide jobs and reinforce sovereignty. “With one-tenth of what the U.N. spends, we could have a Haitian Defense Force,” he said. “If they had brought that money to bring jobs to Haiti, maybe we’d have the same amount of stability we have now, and probably be more sustainable.” The long recovery effort was similarly compromised, he complained: of thirteen billion dollars promised by international donors, “we got less than four billion, and it came with all kinds of conditions.”

Martelly’s arguments were those of a leader who had discovered severe limitations on his authority. When I asked how much power he actually wielded, compared with the foreign presence in Haiti, he gave a sour smile and said, “I’ll tell you one thing. It’s definitely not fifty-one per cent.”

When Martelly took office, parliament was working out of ramshackle temporary quarters, in a police academy on the outskirts of the capital. The government was in disarray: some thirty per cent of civil servants

had died in the earthquake. And though huge amounts of money had been promised, the country was effectively broke. Martelly’s cousin Richard Morse—the owner of the Hotel Oloffson, made legendary in Graham Greene’s novel “The Comedians”—recalled those days as hopeful ones. “The left had failed, the right had failed, we’d had the earthquake—and so this was supposed to be about trying to figure out something else,” he explained. “But, as soon as he knew he’d won, it changed.”

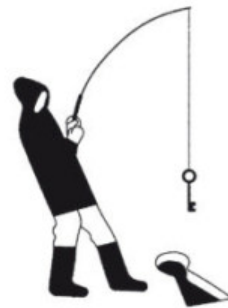
Martelly has shaped his government largely on the basis of instinct and personal affinity, hiring and firing numerous cabinet ministers, drawn from Aristide’s former party and, more often, from among his friends. Hilda Baker, a political consultant who worked closely with Martelly’s Interior Ministry for a year, said, “They didn’t know how to govern, and weren’t very nice to the entrenched bureaucracy.”

Martelly’s rivals in parliament refused to pass the laws that he proposed, and for years he argued with them over the makeup of an electoral commission, without which no elections could be held. As the government slowed to a halt, Martelly realized that he had an advantage: when members of parliament reached the end of their terms, the impasse would make it impossible to elect successors. In 2012, a hundred and thirty elected mayors had their terms expire, and he replaced them with government appointees. By last

spring, only eleven elected officials remained in Haiti, and Martelly’s opponents were furiously attacking him for ruling by decree.

These days, Port-au-Prince buzzes with accusations about the President. Alice Blanchet, who has been an adviser to several prime ministers, spoke of

Martelly as a “thief” who had “no regard for the law.” Former officials accuse him of using molly, cocaine, crack. Martelly’s history makes him susceptible to such rumors; he built a career providing music for unrestrained partying, and he has admitted to smoking crack in earlier days. Yet nearly all these allegations are made without any evidence, by political opponents who seem



to rely more on theatrical flair than on facts. One businessman who joined Martelly's government after the earthquake told me that he resigned when he saw "dark forces taking over." When I asked him what he meant, he demurred: "I could get a bullet in the head."

The more substantial charges are about those who surround Martelly. When I asked the businessman whether the President was corrupt, he said, "Nothing in my presence pointed to personal corruption. Among some ministers, yes." Baker told me that, during her time at the Interior Ministry, she was encouraged to add ten per cent to each contract to allow for graft. "The problem is that the people who follow Michel are gangsters," she said. "It is a gang government." She now works with a rival political party, and periodically visits the slums to meet with gang leaders and pay for their loyalty. She said they had told her that they also took payments from Martelly's people.

Last month, a U.S. congressional assessment of Martelly's government gave him the benefit of the doubt: "Although corruption is a widespread problem, the State Department reports that the government does not encourage or facilitate distribution of illicit drugs or the laundering of drug-trafficking profits." But several of Martelly's close associates have been accused of serious crimes. In 2013, a friend and political supporter of his was arrested on drug charges. Soon afterward, the prosecutor who ordered the arrest, Jean Marie Salomon, was suspended for abuse of power. Salomon quickly resigned and left the country; the friend disappeared. In another case, Woodley Ethéart, a former music promoter, was charged with leading a gang that was suspected of kidnapping seventeen people and killing a police inspector. The judge in the case found that Ethéart had made several calls to the kidnappers, and noted apparent financial irregularities: Ethéart, an employee of the Interior Ministry with a salary of about fifteen hundred dollars a month, had six cars and seven bank accounts. (Ethéart denied any wrongdoing.) His family also ran a lavish French restaurant where the President dined frequently. After Martelly's brother-in-law, a friend of

## COTILLION PHOTO

These young women will last forever, posed like greyhounds,  
trapped in the silver crust of the frame.  
You can't tell one from another, the breed is so pure.  
They will never run. Each one aloft  
on a frozen wave of white cotillion lace  
to resemble marriage, to resemble fate.  
I remember July sun pouring down  
in a prickly meadow, and a garter-snake skin  
laid out like fairy lingerie on a stone wall.  
This was Connecticut, there would be a stone wall.  
Crickets were scraping marrow from the day.  
I was young; I'd been alone for weeks.  
I painted the meadow morning and afternoon  
trying to capture the crackling sound with my brush.  
I was reading "Oedipus Rex."  
I understood neither the snake skin nor the play.  
"Your life is one long night," said Oedipus  
to the prophet, Oedipus, who saw nothing.  
Oak trees rustled in drought. In saffron grass  
small creatures skittered. There came a day  
when I said to myself, "I should prefer to sleep."  
Small planets tasted dry and bitter on my tongue.  
And two days later I woke. Alone in the creaking barn  
at dusk, not knowing what day, what month, what year,  
but feeling the haul of earth rolling on its way.  
"It is not your fate that I should be your ruin,"  
the prophet said. I moved my arms,  
my legs, I unclenched my hands,  
and stood up dizzy from the cot. What was to come  
would come in its own good time  
outside the frame. The moon was rising  
above the hill, a shy wind gathered force,  
and trees, in their black silhouettes, linked arms.

—Rosanna Warren

Ethéart's, called officials on his behalf, the prosecution dropped the charges, arguing that no evidence linked him to the gang.

Pierre Esperance, who runs Haiti's National Human Rights Defense Network, expressed frustrations when I visited his office, in Port-au-Prince. "There are a lot of people around Martelly and his family who have connections with criminal gangs," he said. Martelly's wife, Sophia, has often been accused of profiting from a term as the head of a Presidential commission on alleviating poverty; her brother Kiko has admitted selling drugs in the past, and he allegedly remains involved in narcotics trafficking.

When I talked with Sophia Martelly, she pointed out that her husband's administration had been unusually lenient with the press and with political opponents, and suggested that the unconstrained atmosphere encouraged speculation. The commission she led lasted a year and spent less than a million dollars, she said: "Even so, the opposition came and accused me of stealing thirty million dollars from it." She threw up her hands and looked incredulous. "With Michel, it's the first time Haiti's press can do whatever they want," she said. "They can call me a slut, anything they want." When I asked about the accusations against her brother, Sophia fell silent. Finally, she



said, "My brother is my brother. I love him, and he will always remain my brother, no matter what."

One of Martelly's former advisers describes him as a "boiling man": eager to get things done but distractible. The landscape in and around Port-au-Prince provides a record of his fitful accomplishments. Throughout his Presidency, Martelly has lobbied heavily for international investment in Haitian tourism. With the country's poor infrastructure and alarming crime rates, it was initially a hard sell. Since Martelly took office, airlines have opened new routes to Haiti, and revenue from tourism has quintupled. The State Department continues to warn prospective travellers to buy evacuation insurance. But, as Martelly told me, "gun crime is down, and almost no one gets kidnapped anymore!"

On the skyline, a handful of striking new buildings suggest the glimmerings of a business revival: a Marriott hotel, a Best Western Premier, a Royal Oasis, and an office tower for the cell-phone provider Digicel. "We've been able to create confidence," Martelly said. Since 2012, the economy has grown three to four per cent a year.

But much of that growth has been spurred by aid money. The earthquake brought pledges of support from around the world, estimated at more than thirteen billion dollars. Of that, humanitarian relief money amounted to almost two and a half billion dollars—but, as Jonathan Katz notes, "at least 93 per cent would go right back to the UN or NGOs to pay for supplies and personnel, or never leave the donor states." Only six hundred and fifty million dollars reached the Haitian government, and it came with severe restrictions.

One afternoon, I met Yves Germain Joseph, the planning minister, who is charged with handling public works. A no-nonsense economist in his sixties, Joseph has worked in government since the Duvalier days, and formerly served Martelly as a senior adviser. In his office, in a modest villa on a hillside in Pétionville, Joseph told me that, in many of the projects supported by the U.S. and its allies in the international community, Haiti had little agency. He described an eighty-million-

dollar effort to rebuild the country's main university hospital. "The donors gave the bid to a Spanish firm, and although the Haitian government gave a third of the money, it doesn't have enough authority to affect the outcome," he said. The project became mired in international disagreements, and construction never got started.

Money from elsewhere in the world has come with fewer stipulations. Joseph showed me an album of photographs illustrating government projects: page after page of schools in rural areas. Virtually all had been financed by funds from Petrocaribe, an oil program created by the late Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chávez. Martelly reportedly received about two hundred million dollars a year from Petrocaribe, to spend as his government saw fit. Some of the projects have become embroiled in scandal: in one case, a journalist in the Dominican Republic produced documents suggesting that Martelly had taken two and a half million dollars in kickbacks for awarding contracts worth three hundred and eighty-five million dollars to companies owned by a Dominican politician. (Martelly said that the allegations were "all lies.")

But the unmonitored funds had made

possible most of Martelly's recent public works, including the Delmas Viaduct. "The Petrocaribe money allows the government to establish its own priorities," Joseph said. "The freedom given to the government in spending this money can allow for certain abuses, O.K. But between those abuses and the difficulties of obtaining these funds from the multilateral organizations, the benefits are obvious."

Many Haitians feel that the problems are systemic. Maryse Penette-Kedar, the widely respected president of Prodev, a foundation that provides education for underprivileged children, told me, "If another guy had been President, and the institutions were this weak, it would be the same now, with corruption and this and that." Penette-Kedar has lived in Pétionville since 1953, in one of the district's oldest remaining houses. "We're worse off than we were then," she said. "We don't even have one bucket for every Haitian to take a bath in every day. This is the most fucked-up situation in the Western Hemisphere, and I think everyone needs to take a pause and assess." Penette-Kedar didn't blame Martelly. "He has done things that others didn't do, and I think he



*"I once mistakenly thought I was dating someone for a whole month because I couldn't tell that his texts were sarcastic."*



*"If you could be in any cubicle, which one would it be?"*

will never say no to something that will help this country," she said. "But the problem is follow-up, a team to manage what he's done. I think he'll be shocked in a year to hear stories about certain things that happened that he was not even aware of."

At times, Martelly seems as regretful as anyone else. "I had a big learning curve," he told me. "I am disappointed, because by the time I figured it out I was too far into my mandate to make big decisions." The flow of aid is slowing, and he doesn't have much time to complete his initiatives.

One morning, he took me to see one of his projects, in Wharf Jérémie, a crime-ridden slum on the bay in Port-au-Prince. As we arrived, a crowd of young men and boys greeted him, waving and shouting to get his attention. Martelly strode through the crowd, tossing out cheap soccer balls from a plastic bag; when scuffles broke out over them, he sent his security men to intervene. Next to the bay, hundreds of people milled around a construction site. The engineers overseeing the project explained that, after two years, their team had nearly completed a covered market, a pier and a jetty for a handful of fishing boats, and a pair of vocational schools. In the distance, across the bay, a vast mosaic of shanties spread across the hills. Martelly looked around. "It's

not much," he said, with rough candor. "These people have always lived in the shit, and, even with this project, they're still going to be living in the shit. But it's something."

Haitians who are dismayed by their country's progress increasingly blame the developed world. Esperance, the human-rights leader, told me, "If you go to the U.S. Embassy and complain about Martelly, they tell you, 'Aw, it's just Haiti, the institutions are weak.'" He added, "The fact is, the international community supports all of Martelly's transgressions." Though the U.S. cut off aid to Haiti for three years under Aristide, it has kept sending money to Martelly—some three hundred million dollars in 2014.

For most of Martelly's term, the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti was Pam White, a close friend of the Clintons who was appointed in 2012. White had a background in international aid—including five years in Haiti and stints as a U.S.A.I.D. director in several African countries—but only two years of diplomatic experience. Even as allegations increased against Martelly, she maintained such close contact with him that she was referred to in Port-au-Prince as "Haiti's second First Lady."

White left her post in September, and retired to an island in Maine. When

we spoke recently, she praised Martelly warmly. "I think the country grew under his leadership," she said. "And it's pretty amazing that he managed to survive five years, too—Haiti has a way of getting rid of its leaders before their time is up." In her telling, he had reshaped the country's infrastructure: "They built something like two hundred schools, several hospitals, kilometres and kilometres of roads, water reservoirs." She acknowledged that a lot of the projects were paid for with Petrocaribe money, and that several ministry buildings hadn't been finished. She wasn't sure where the money had gone: "It's a valid question." But she defended the efforts of the international community. "There were ten million cubic feet of rubble! And most of the work of removing it was being done by wheelbarrow. In 2012, there were still three hundred and fifty thousand people living in tents; now it's down to sixty-five thousand."

In important areas, White agreed, Martelly had made little headway. "The judicial sector is still a complete mess, corrupt from top to bottom," she said. But, asked about the allegations against him and his associates, she said that she had tried to investigate but got nowhere. "I kept hearing the rumors and kept asking my people, 'Show me something,'" she said. "And I've got to tell you—no one put so much as a piece of paper on my desk."

Many close observers are perplexed by America's policy in Haiti. Vicki Huddleston, a former chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy and a friend of White's, said, "I always wanted to ask her, 'Why are you so close to Martelly?'" A longstanding D.E.A. informant in Haiti suggested that, even if the allegations about his associates were true, no one was particularly concerned. "The President may have used his influence to give someone a get-out-of-jail-free card—but, well, this is Haiti," he said. And, whatever else Martelly had done, he complied with the D.E.A.'s local operations, which resulted in several major busts, including a recent one in which two nephews of Venezuela's First Lady were arrested for trafficking cocaine.

Perhaps the most common and persuasive theory is apathy and distraction. Katz told me, "Obama and Clinton's



political legacy in Haiti is a bad-boy former pop star from the militarist right who took until the tail end of his term to hold an election. I think he's probably achieved more or less what they wanted him to: he stayed in power, didn't kick out the U.N., didn't stand in the way of foreign-investment projects, and resisted political violence, just enough to keep the country from melting down. The fact that nearly everyone in Haiti is worse off than they were five years ago gets a pass. That's the tyranny of low expectations for you."

A Western official in Haiti suggested that the goal was containment. Tens of thousands of "boat people" have fled Haiti since the seventies, and many have ended up in the U.S. "The bottom line for the Western democracies is that we don't want chaos in Haiti," the official said. "If that happens, we'll have three million Haitians trying to find a blade of grass to eat somewhere else."

Pam White seemed wary of forming conclusions about Martelly's ethics. When I asked about the allegations that he had covered for his friends, she said only, "You know, he had a career for thirty years where these people were his friends." White told me that she and Martelly had talked at times about the disposition of government contracts. "He used to say to me, 'I never made a cent off of this,'" she said. She laughed, and added, "But, then again, why would he tell the truth?" Even after decades, the place seemed impenetrable. "In the end, I only ever trusted five people in Haiti," she told me. "I have known people there for thirty-five years, and, you know, they'll lie right to your face."

One afternoon, I asked Martelly what he was going to do when he left the Presidency: Go back on the stage? Go into business? "I want to do it all," he said. "But the first thing I want to do is—when I leave office, it'll be the same day as Carnival in Haiti. I'm thinking I am going to go straight away and get on a Carnival float. I want to boom it out."

His real plans seem much more tightly directed. Although Haitian law forbids Presidents to hold consecutive terms, they are permitted to run again after a five-year break, and Martelly clearly intends to hold on to his in-

fluence. When I asked him about leaving office with so much left undone, he said, "If there is continuity, I can come back."

At the concert in Delmas, he introduced a païsan who grew bananas, and who had just signed a contract to sell a hundred and fifty million euros' worth to Germany. He turned to the line of aides standing behind him and beckoned to a slender man to come forward. "This is the man I have picked to succeed me for my party," he said. "His name is Jovenel Moïse." As the crowd roared, Martelly said, "He looks too skinny to be a politician, I know!" Appearing grateful, Moïse stepped up to speak for a moment, and then stepped back. The crowd applauded dutifully, and the music resumed.

For many in the country, the results of the elections are a foregone conclusion. Georges Michel, an eminent historian who has advised Martelly on restoring Haiti's military, told me, "Martelly is so popular among the lower classes, who dance to him, that he could propose a dog to be elected, and they would vote for it." The first round of elections was held in October; Moïse, campaigning as the Banana Man, was the front-runner, with thirty-three per cent of the vote. Jude Célestin, who lost out to Martelly in 2011, came in second, and quickly protested that the process was unfair: Haiti's electoral commission found problems with eighty per cent of the ballots. As the runoff was postponed, until late January, Célestin argued that it should be cancelled and an interim government formed. But the Western official told me, "We are funding these elections, and, frankly, we are not going to allow that. If Célestin doesn't want to compete, then the other man is going to win."

Moïse's plantation sits near the coast, in a place called Trou-du-Nord—Hole of the North. One morning, I met him there, in a town-size square of vividly green banana trees fringed by mountains. Moïse was talking jovially with workers as they loaded freshly cut banana stems onto a truck. One said, teasingly, "Mr. President, you're leaving us behind, Papa." Moïse laughed, and denied that he would ever leave.

He was being shadowed by a German man, a quality-control inspector from Fruit Logistics, the company that

had signed the export agreement with him. With an Eagle Scout's enthusiasm, Moïse explained that his plantation had twenty-five hundred acres planted in bananas; it would eventually expand to fifteen thousand acres. There were three thousand workers, who belonged to a coöperative that held equity in the business. In a week, he would send off a shipment—Haiti's first export of bananas in sixty years. "We used to be the No. 1 banana exporter in the Caribbean, and after 1955—nothing," he said.

Moïse had trained as a water-treatment engineer, but he became convinced that the coastal plain was exceptionally fertile, and had drawn up plans for a plantation. He had met with Martelly early in his term and asked him for support. At first, Martelly resisted, telling him that he was "crazy," but he was eventually won over. The two joined an agricultural delegation to Europe, where Moïse, at a conference of fruit importers, secured the Germans' interest.

The President's backing had been crucial, he said: "Without political power, this country can't be developed." With that in mind, he had decided last spring to run for parliament. Martelly dissuaded him, saying that there were two other candidates vying for the seat. He had a better idea: "I think you can be the next President." Martelly told him that he would back him if he agreed to run.

"I talked to my wife," Moïse recalled, laughing. "She said to me, 'You have to run. You are like Messi or Jesus Christ. It's your job to save Haiti.'" Moïse offered a brisk plan, strikingly like Martelly's, to save the country: "Agriculture, tourism, construction, business, outsourcing. We have seventy-five thousand government employees who give only ten per cent of their work capacity. We will try and get them to thirty per cent. We have the people and the knowledge—it's the mentality we lack." He seemed enlivened by campaigning. "It's exciting, because I like my country, and I am a winner," he said. "I am going to win!" I asked if he and Martelly had a twenty-year plan in mind, trading places in the Presidency. Moïse nodded. "Yes. It's a good plan. We need stability. We need it." ♦

Donald Trump has a rule at his rallies: for the fifty minutes before he takes the stage, the only music that can be played is from a set list that he put together. The list shows a sensitive side, mixing in Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" and music from "Cats" and "The Phantom of the Opera." But it's heavy on the Rolling Stones—"Sympathy for the Devil," "You Can't Always Get What You Want," and the famously impolitic "Brown Sugar." The young volunteer in charge of music for one rally sent me the full Trump-curated playlist and asked for requests. "Remember," he said, "the more inappropriate for a political event, the better."

In mid-December, Trump brought his show to the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, in Arizona, where several thousand people crammed into an airplane hangar. The classic rock stopped as his Boeing 757, which has his name emblazoned on the fuselage in white letters, taxied toward us. "Ladies and gentlemen, the plane has arrived," an announcer said, and the hangar filled with the patriotic chords of the theme from "Air Force One," the Harrison Ford thriller in which Ford plays an American President who battles Kazakh hijackers. "Dude, that is so cool," a young man behind me said to his friend as they watched. "Who needs Air Force One when you have your own airplane?" (According to a list of "Corporate Aircrafts owned by Donald J. Trump" in an appendix to Trump's new book, "Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again," Trump also owns a Cessna Citation X and three Sikorsky S-76 helicopters.)

A small segment of Trump's audience has little interest in politics, or even in voting for him. They come to see a free live show by a famous political performance artist. At each of the four Trump rallies I attended this winter—in Arizona, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Mississippi—some people left after taking a few pictures with their phones, and the departures steadily increased as Trump rambled on about his lead in the polls and about various losers in media and politics. But most stayed, and often many more were outside waiting to get in or huddled around television screens in overflow rooms. Trump is a celebrity but he's not *just* a celebrity. "Somebody said, 'Oh, Trump's a great entertainer,'" Trump would tell the crowd in Mesa. "That's a



FACEOFF

## THE DUEL

*The Trump and Cruz campaigns embody opposite views of politics and the future of the G.O.P.*

BY RYAN LIZZA

*One analyst explains the breadth of Trump's appeal among Republicans, saying, "He is posing*





*a new question: to what extent should the G.O.P. be the advocates for those struggling in the modern economy?"*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK PETERSON

lot of bullshit, I'll tell you. We have a message, we have a message, and the message is we don't want to let other people take advantage of us."

Trump's 757 passed the hangar and made a U-turn while Secret Service agents moved into position at the bottom of a stairwell. (The Obama Administration granted Secret Service protection at Trump's request, following a process designed to offer early protection for the candidates deemed most likely to win the nomination. The only other Republican candidate awarded similar protection this election cycle was Ben Carson, whose campaign faded soon after.) The aircraft's thick door popped open and the candidate appeared. Trump was wearing a shiny blue tie, and from a distance his head looked like a pumpkin-colored balloon on a blue string descending to earth. The announcer said, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the next President of the United States, Donald J. Trump," and the "Air Force One" music gave way to the rousing drum bursts of the anthem played at every Trump rally: Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It."

Trump briefly greeted the crowd, and then left the stage to record an interview with Bill O'Reilly, of Fox News, at the rear of the hangar. The day before, at a feisty Republican debate in Las Vegas,

Trump had clashed several times with Jeb Bush—Bush called Trump a "chaos candidate," Trump described Bush's campaign as "a total disaster"—and O'Reilly wanted to talk about it.

After seven months of Trump, many people who attend his rallies have seen his show before, and his fans mimic his putdowns and cheer their favorite lines. Sometimes Trump asks, "Who's gonna pay for the wall?" and the crowd yells back, "Mexico!" At another rally, Trump shouted, "Obama—" He then paused for dramatic effect while nodding his head. He finished his sentence with "her." When he repeated it, the crowd filled in the missing word: "Schlonged!"—a reference to Obama's victory over Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primary. In Mesa, Trump told O'Reilly that Bush has "a very, very low number," referring to the polls, prompting a man in the hangar to yell, "Zero-energy Bush!"

At many events for Presidential candidates, supporters are hyper-sophisticated about politics and speak in sound bites that echo those of the candidates. One of Trump's great successes is in attracting people who are otherwise alienated from the political process. The die-hard Trump fans I encountered were mostly newcomers. In Mesa, when Trump told O'Reilly that Charles Krauthammer,

the well-known (to conservatives) columnist and Fox News commentator, was "a totally biased terrible guy," a puzzled supporter in the crowd asked a friend, "Who is that? Was he in the debate?"

Trump's fans tend to express little regard for political norms. They cheer at his most outlandish statements. O'Reilly asked Trump if he meant it when he said that he would "take out" the family members of terrorists. He didn't believe that Trump would "put out hits on women and children" if he were elected. Trump replied, "I would do pretty severe stuff." The Mesa crowd erupted in applause. "Yeah, baby!" a man near me yelled. I had never previously been to a political event at which people cheered for the murder of women and children.

The racism of some Trump supporters has been well documented. At one rally in Las Vegas in mid-December, attendees punched a black protester while others yelled, "Shoot him," "Kick his ass," "Light the motherfucker on fire," and "Sieg heil." But most of the Trump supporters I encountered were people struggling to get by in an economy they no longer understand.

"We're just tired of the actions of the government nowadays," Karon Stewart, who is fifty-nine years old, told me after a rally in Mississippi. "The simple people pretty much have been forgotten."

She said that she has followed Trump's tabloid life on TV, and last year, when she heard him speak about politics, she registered to vote for the first time. She was not persuaded by arguments that Trump has been disrespectful to women and would have trouble running against Hillary Clinton. "I am a woman," she said. "I wouldn't vote for Hillary Clinton if she was the last person on the face of the earth. She is a disgrace to womankind."

Stewart said that Trump supporters were misunderstood. "We're not racist," she told me. "We're not prejudiced. We just love everybody. But we're tired of being run over."

She added, "My husband is in his fifties. He's got one leg. But he gets out there and works two almost-full-time jobs, seventeen hours every day, Monday through Friday. And he works on the weekends. But there are people out there that we're paying welfare who've got two perfectly good legs, and they just won't get up off of their tushies to get a job."

## THE TELL-ALL HEART





"That's pitiful," her husband, Bob, who lost his leg in a construction accident, said. "I think Trump will change that."

On January 7th, Ted Cruz was standing in an airplane hangar near Webster City, Iowa, surrounded by reporters with cameras and microphones. He had arrived on a campaign bus painted black and stencilled with the phrase "Cruzin' to Caucus." Rather than a large team of Secret Service agents, he had two security guards, who were paunchier than Trump's agents and wore Secret Service-style earpieces.

In traditional caucus style, Cruz was zigzagging through twenty-eight Iowa counties, visiting four or five towns a day. Trump relies on his celebrity to bring supporters out at large rallies; Cruz speaks to small crowds at Pizza Ranch restaurants and in school cafeterias, and he has an army of volunteers knocking on doors. Working the small towns can pay off. Although there are roughly six hundred thousand registered Republicans in Iowa, only a small percentage of them participate in the caucuses. In 2012, in a fairly typical showing, a hundred and twenty-two thousand voted. When the field is divided, a candidate can win the event with roughly twenty-five thousand to forty thousand supporters. At any given stop on Cruz's bus tour, his audience might represent one or two per cent of the total number of caucus-goers he needs to defeat Trump.

Cruz is a true conservative ideologue. His father, a right-wing evangelical preacher, encouraged him to read classic libertarian economic texts, and in college, at Princeton, and at Harvard law school he participated in conservative politics. In 1995, he clerked for the former federal appellate judge Michael Luttig, then one of the right's favorites, and the following year he clerked for William Rehnquist, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. When Cruz was Solicitor General of Texas, from 2003 to 2008, he turned the job into a tool of the conservative movement, inserting himself into fights over gun control, the death penalty, the display of the Ten Commandments on public property, and the influence of the International Court of Justice. After his election to the Senate, in 2012, he championed the Tea Party's most high-profile causes, such as stopping bipartisan immigration reform and

shutting down the government in a doomed effort to defund Obamacare.

The Trump and Cruz campaigns are approaching the G.O.P. primary, especially in Iowa, from sharply different angles, but both candidates are benefitting from a dramatic development: the Republican Party is no longer able to control its nominating contest. Into the middle of last century, the nominee was selected by party bosses at the quadrennial convention, on the premise that the profession-



als in the party knew who was most qualified and electable. "The parties do not need laws to make them sensitive to the wishes of the voters any more than we need laws compelling merchants to please their customers," the political scientist E. E. Schattschneider argued in 1942, countering criticism that the process was undemocratic. "Democracy is not found in the parties but *between* the parties."

In the nineteen-seventies, both parties changed their rules, transferring the decision-making power to voters in newly mandated state primaries and caucuses. Suddenly, almost anyone had a shot at the nomination, and political outsiders—George McGovern in 1972, Jimmy Carter in 1976, Ronald Reagan in 1980—flourished. Although voters felt empowered, some critics were concerned. In the early eighties, the political scientist Nelson W. Polsby warned that the quality and popularity of government would suffer if "persons unable to pass muster with their peers occasionally prove to be popularly attractive" and win their party's nomination.

By the nineteen-eighties and nineties, party elites had managed to regain control over the process, and party insiders began crushing insurgent candidacies. The key to victory was the "invisible primary"—winning over major donors, interest groups, and elected officials in the year before the actual voting began. To many observers, the invisible primary resembled the old

system. In "The Party Decides," published in 2008, the political scientist Hans Noel and three co-authors showed that, since 1980, the best predictor of the Democratic and Republican nominee has been endorsements by elected officials.

Trump—a media-created populist who has no such endorsements and is despised by Party insiders—defies that theory. "If Trump wins, he'd be forcing himself on the Party," Noel told me. Cruz, too, represents the kind of hostile takeover that Polsby warned about. He is the consummate political insider—a U.S. Senator from Texas with a long history of activism in the G.O.P.—but he is hated by Republican elites, and none of his Senate colleagues are backing him. The two candidates offer visions for the future of the Republican Party that are starkly different from one another and from what the Party seems to envisage for itself.

Pundits have taken to endlessly discussing the different "lanes" the candidates occupy, an idea best articulated in a new book, "The Four Faces of the Republican Party," by Dante J. Scala and Henry Olsen. They describe a Republican primary electorate that, since the nineteen-eighties, has been divided into four well-defined groups: moderate and liberal voters, who make up twenty-five to thirty per cent of the electorate; somewhat conservative voters (thirty-five to forty per cent); very conservative evangelical voters (about twenty per cent); and very conservative secular voters (five to ten per cent). A successful candidate starts off by appealing to one of the lanes and then absorbs voters from one or more of the others as opponents drop out and their supporters look for someone else. Cruz is assiduously following this road map by presenting himself as the champion of the two "very conservative" voting blocs. He obeys every traffic sign and rarely veers left, hoping that later in the primary season he can expand into the other lanes.

The Iowa electorate is fertile ground for this strategy. Iowa is a Midwestern state with a Republican voter base that looks as if it were from Dixie. "Of the nine states with 30 per cent or more 'religious right' voters, only one (Iowa) was outside the South," Olsen and Scala write. Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, Jeb Bush, and John Kasich, all of whom fare better among moderate Republicans, haven't spent as much time in Iowa, and are hoping,



*"Check it out, guys—finally got my wine legs!"*

at best, for a third-place finish there.

Their relative absence has allowed Cruz to emerge as Trump's main rival. Trump sometimes stumbles through the subject of religion—he uses a family Bible too obviously as a prop and recently discussed a passage from "Two Corinthians" rather than "Second Corinthians." Cruz speaks the language of evangelicals. In his Iowa campaign literature, he vows that on his first day in office, in addition to rescinding Obama's "illegal and unconstitutional" executive orders and ripping up the Iranian Nuclear Deal, he will "investigate and prosecute" Planned Parenthood, tell the I.R.S. that the "persecution of religious liberty is over," and begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. (Conservative evangelicals are one of the most intensely pro-Israel groups in America.)

Trump, though, has effectively ignored the conventional wisdom about Republican lanes. He's like a snowplow barreling across the highway. State and national polls consistently show that he draws strongly from all four ideological segments of the party. His strongest supporters are less educated and less well off; his fiercest opponents are Republicans with advanced degrees and high incomes. Trump has turned what is traditionally an ideological fight into a class war.

"The biggest thing to understand about

Trump is that he is effectively redefining the G.O.P. by asking a different question than the one the Party has been answering for fifty years," Henry Olsen told me. Since at least the Goldwater nomination of 1964, he said, every nomination battle has aimed to answer the question "To what extent should the G.O.P. be the vehicle for the conservative movement?" In addressing it, the Republican primary electorate has always sorted along a spectrum based on ideology: moderates and liberals oppose the idea; very conservative voters, the kind that Cruz is courting, champion it; and somewhat conservative ones split the difference. Trump draws from all four factions because he's uninterested in how conservative the G.O.P. should or shouldn't be. "He is not trying to answer this question at all," Olsen said. "Instead, he is posing a new question: to what extent should the G.O.P. be the advocates for those struggling in the modern economy?"

Throughout his campaign, Trump has made much of the dangers posed by immigration and political correctness. But central to his platform is his insistence that Americans are being cheated. To protect themselves, he says, they need to hire someone who will cut them a better deal. Domestically, he argues that undocumented immigrants are

causing the wages of middle-class workers to plummet, and that campaign donors are bribing politicians—except Trump, a billionaire who can't be bought. His foreign policy, such as it is, is guided by the idea that America is besieged by a long list of adversaries. He customizes his us-versus-them argument to every issue. At rallies in New Hampshire and Iowa, he warns voters that the two states might lose their status as hosts of the first two Presidential nominating contests. "There's a big movement to put you at the back of the pack," he said in New Hampshire recently. (In reality, there is little momentum for any movement to change the primary calendar.)

On January 2nd, Trump staged a rally at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum, in Biloxi, a gambling and resort town on the Gulf. The venue was adjacent to Beauvoir, the estate where Jefferson Davis lived after the Civil War. At Trump events, the press is confined to a section that is surrounded by metal barriers, preventing journalists from mingling with the crowd. To avoid that, I waited in line for almost three hours with Trump supporters. Popular buttons and stickers included ones that say, "If she can't please her husband, she can't please the country," "Bomb the hell out of ISIS," "Up Yours Hillary," and "Trump That Bitch." A middle-aged man in front of me joked to his friend, "If they turn the entire Middle East into a parking lot, are we still going to have to take our shoes off at the airport?"

By emphasizing class issues over ideology, Trump has been able to smuggle into the Party all sorts of heretical views. On foreign policy, where he has been especially ignorant of basic facts, he has questioned America's security commitment to South Korea and Japan, shown little interest in having America engaged militarily anywhere in the Middle East, and embraced Vladimir Putin while condemning Angela Merkel. He vows to protect Social Security and Medicare, using language similar to that of Democrats, and he promises to invest in a large infrastructure program, a major Obama and Clinton priority. He has abandoned the Party's free-trade fundamentalism and threatened trade wars and tariffs against countries that don't do America's bidding.

Every attempt by frustrated opponents to attack these policies as outside



the conservative mainstream has failed. The attitude of many Trump fans can best be summed up by Ann Coulter. “I don’t care if @realDonaldTrump wants to perform abortions in the White House,” she tweeted after reading Trump’s immigration policy paper.

Trump knows enough about the conservative movement to speak its language fluently on certain issues—he is a Second Amendment purist, for example. At one rally, he imitated the Paris terrorists methodically killing unarmed innocents—“Get over here, *boom*. Your turn, get over here, *boom*”—and argued that if the Parisians who were murdered at cafés and at the Bataclan had been armed they could have saved themselves. But, unlike Cruz, he generally doesn’t use the traditional language of the right. At his rallies, he speaks in a rambling style; he seems to be constantly reminding himself of stories and outrages to share. In Biloxi, he sometimes appeared to be having a conversation with himself—asking a question, answering it, then second-guessing himself with a shrug and a note of uncertainty.

When he talks about current events, he’s akin to your uncle in Queens who just read that morning’s *New York Post* and wants to tell you about every outrageous news item. “We built a forty-three-million-dollar gas station in Afghanistan and it doesn’t even sell the right gas!” Trump told the crowd in Mesa, without providing any additional context. He was outraged about alleged ISIS cell phones carried by Syrian refugees (“Who pays their monthly bill?”) and cited a doctor friend who is leaving the profession because of Obamacare (“The guy’s got more accountants than nurses!”). Noting that Nabisco is moving a factory from Chicago to Mexico, he announced, “I’m never eating Oreos again.” All these outrages occur because we’re “led by the stupidest people.” Trump promised, “We’re not gonna let that crap happen.”

On campaign stops, Cruz talks about specific issues that resonate with conservative constituencies: Planned Parenthood, religious liberty, Obamacare. Trump touches on the same subjects, but they often seem like afterthoughts. “Obamacare is a disaster,” he told the crowd at a rally in Hilton Head, South Carolina, on December 30th. “We are going to repeal it, we are going to re-

place it. There are so many great things we can do on health care. So many good things. And it will cost you much less money, and it will be great.”

Every Trump event features three set pieces. First is his recitation of his poll numbers. “We have to go through them,” he said at one rally. If he wasn’t winning, he added, “I wouldn’t be talking about them.” This may be narcissistic, but it’s also strategic. There is a well-documented bandwagon effect in politics: undecided voters who don’t have strong feelings about candidates often flock to the person who appears most likely to win.

Next comes Trump’s assault on the media. This too is strategic, serving to disguise the degree to which he has mastered the form. “I have a mutually profitable two-way relationship with the media,” he writes in “Crippled America.” “We give each other what we need.” At the Mesa rally, he went out of his way to criticize several commentators who are regularly critical of him on Fox News, one of the most important sources of news for Republican voters. Trump mocked George Will, the conservative columnist. “You fall asleep listening to this guy,” he said. “If he didn’t wear the little spectacles, he wouldn’t even be bright—nobody would think he was bright.” He continued his pummeling of Krauthammer (“He’s terrible. He is so unfair to me. He is the worst”) and opened a new front against Stephen F. Hayes, of *The Weekly Standard*. “I’ve never even heard of this guy. When my name is mentioned, it’s like he’s aboil. He goes crazy.”

He pointed to the press section and derided “all those sleazebags up there.” At other stops, he calls the travelling press “scum.” The crowd always turns and boos the reporters, who are isolated in their metal pen. One young journalist who travels with Trump told me that she’s grown accustomed to hearing him use the same words—scum and sleazebags—to describe ISIS terrorists and American reporters. In Biloxi, Trump spent several minutes berating a cameraman who refused to cut away from him and pan the crowd, as he had demanded. “That guy right there has not moved that camera,” he said. “It’s disgusting.” He tried several times to move on to other topics, but kept returning to the cameraman. “I’d

fire his ass right now if I could,” he said.

Such attacks also help to inoculate him. Much of what Trump says is factually incorrect. At the fact-checking Web site PolitiFact, a majority of the Trump statements investigated have been rated “mostly false” (seventeen per cent), “false” (forty per cent), or “Pants on Fire” (twenty per cent). The more that Trump can discredit the press in the eyes of his supporters, the less they will believe it when the media point out his flaws, such as his claim, in November, that on 9/11 he saw TV footage of thousands of Muslims in New Jersey cheering as the Twin Towers collapsed. Tammy Murphy, an ardent supporter I met after a rally in Nashua, New Hampshire, on December 28th, said she first became aware of Trump in 2012, when he promoted the notion that Obama’s Hawaiian birth certificate was fake and that the President had likely been born in Kenya.

“I just loved his message, and everyone made fun of me,” she said. “The birth-certificate stuff, I loved. I watched all the YouTube videos on it, and what he was saying made sense.” Most New Hampshire voters make up their minds in the final days of the campaign, but Murphy, who said she doesn’t trust the mainstream media and often tweets at the “Today” show for its unfair coverage of Trump, told me that she was committed to voting for him. “I’m dead set unless I find out something down the line,” she said. “But I’m not going to believe what the media tells me. I have to hear it from him. The media does not persuade me one bit.”

The third set piece at a Trump rally is his broadside against political opponents. In New Hampshire, he turned his attention to Chris Christie. Other candidates might seize on an ideological weak spot, such as Christie’s previous support for gun control or Planned Parenthood. Trump started by noting Christie’s chummy relationship with Obama when the President visited the storm-ravaged Jersey Shore in 2012 (“He was like a little boy—‘Oh, I’m with the President!’”), New Jersey’s precarious finances (“a disaster”), his unpopularity (“the people in New Jersey want to throw him out of office”), and how unlikely it was that Christie’s aides didn’t inform him of the plot to create a traffic jam at the George Washington Bridge (“Does anybody

believe that?”). In the middle of his anti-Christie tirade, someone in the crowd yelled, “Give him a hamburger!” Trump laughed and repeated the line.

In January, Trump started in on Cruz. While preparing for a rally in Burlington, Vermont, he took to Twitter and television and managed to turn the conversation into a debate about whether Cruz, who was born in Calgary, Canada, in 1970, is “a natural-born citizen” and eligible to be President under Section 1 of Article Two of the Constitution. (The rally itself became infamous when, as a group of protesters was led away, Trump shouted, “Throw them out! Throw them out into the cold! No coats! Confiscate their coats!”) On January 7th, even John McCain, who was born in what was then the Panama Canal Zone and faced similar questions in 2008, when he was the Republican nominee, jumped on the issue, noting in a radio interview that Cruz’s eligibility was a legitimate question. Trump suggested that Cruz go to federal court and seek an opinion to put the matter to rest.

Cruz was in Iowa that day, on his “Cruz-in’ to Caucus” tour. He was accompanied by Representative Steve King, an immigration hardliner, and Bob Vander Plaats, a power broker among Iowa’s religious conservatives. Last year, they, along with Steve Deace, a popular and inflammatory talk-show host, endorsed Cruz, and their presence was calculated to show Iowans that the hard right was solidly behind his candidacy. On the stump, Cruz delivers every sentence, no matter how generic, as if he imagines himself reciting the Gettysburg Address. “What we’re seeing here in Iowa is conservatives coming together,” he told the press at the stop in Webster City. “If conservatives unite, we win.” The assembled reporters ignored the statement and asked about Trump’s birther charges.

“I’m not going to be taking legal advice anytime soon from Donald Trump,” Cruz said. “My response when Donald tossed this attack out there was simply to tweet out a video of Fonzie from ‘Happy Days’ jumping a shark and to move on. These attacks—this is the silly season of politics.” Despite their differences, Cruz and Trump appeal to some of the same elements of the G.O.P. electorate, and Cruz assumed that embracing Trump was smarter than trying to take him down.

Trump would fall on his own, the thinking went, and when he did his former supporters would flock to Cruz, the only candidate who ever showed Trump any respect. In Webster City, Cruz stuck to the plan, refusing to counter-attack.

“I think there is no doubt that the Washington cartel is in full panic mode,” he said; donors and other Party elites, fretfully debating whether they were more scared of Trump or Cruz, were terrified that they had been unable to control the nomination process. “This election cycle is playing out differently than the way the cartel had counted on, which the grass roots are deciding.”

Cruz walked into an adjacent hangar and gave his stump speech. King and Vander Plaats stood behind him. A small crowd was seated on metal folding chairs, which Cruz’s security guards later used as a barrier to prevent reporters from getting too close to the candidate. After each applause line, he robotically switched the microphone from his left hand to his right, placed his left hand in his pocket and nodded his head until the applause subsided, and then reversed the motions. When Cruz was a child, he memorized the Constitution, and in college he was a national debate champion. His Iowa stump speech was almost identical—word for word and gesture for gesture—at two different stops that day: the same jokes, the same dramatic pauses, the same microphone shuffling and head nodding.

After he finished, he took questions



from the audience. One man asked about legislation to ban sharia law in Iowa. He had heard, on Deace’s talk-radio show, about an alleged incident in Des Moines where a Muslim man tried to behead a young woman who refused to wear a burka. Cruz promised that he would protect Iowans from sharia. “What you’re describing here, sadly, there have been incidences across the country,” he said. “And in my view, under no circumstances should sharia law be enforced in the United States

of America.” The crowd erupted in cheers.

But to win in Iowa Cruz needs everything to go just right. Even vanquishing Trump might not be enough. Iowa’s recent winners have had trouble expanding their appeal. Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas who won Iowa in 2008, and Rick Santorum, the former senator from Pennsylvania who won there in 2012, were quickly overwhelmed in subsequent contests by the strength of the moderate and somewhat conservative voters, who backed McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012.

At one stop, a few hours after the press conference at which Cruz addressed his Canadian birth, Vander Plaats argued that Cruz could win Iowa—and the nomination—if the right consolidated around him and the broad middle of the party remained hopelessly divided. “The establishment has a traffic jam in their lane right now,” he said. “Praise the Lord that they have a traffic jam in their lane, because I think conservatives are now uniting around this guy”—he pointed at the senator—“Ted Cruz.”

For all the hazards facing Cruz, on the eve of voting in Iowa, it is he, one of the most hated men in Washington, who has emerged as the candidate best positioned to bring down the anti-establishment Trump. In New Hampshire, a third candidate might emerge from the crowded field, but on February 1st the Republican nominating contest will begin as a match between Cruz and Trump.

In the unlikely event that Cruz wins the nomination, he will find it difficult to gain the loyalty of other elected officials and Party leaders, and he will make a poor opponent for Hillary Clinton. His nomination will be akin to Barry Goldwater’s victory in 1964, or, on the Democratic side, McGovern’s victory in 1972. Both Senators were too far outside the mainstream to win in a general election. Cruz would likely lose, but he wouldn’t necessarily destroy the G.O.P. in the process. However much his colleagues dislike him, he’s still one of them.

Trump is not. Some prominent Republicans fear that a Trump nomination would fundamentally alter the identity of the Republican Party, even if he goes on to lose the general election, which seems likely. The Party would become more downscale, a potential asset if it meant



drawing in disaffected Democrats, but also more alienating to non-whites, who represent the largest source of potential growth in the electorate. It would be defined by ethno-nationalism at home and an anti-interventionist retreat from America's obligations abroad. The last major figure in Republican politics who came close to Trump's brand of nationalism was Pat Buchanan, the former Nixon aide who ran for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1992 and 1996. Buchanan was driven from the Republican Party by mainstream conservatives, who called him an isolationist and an anti-Semite; in 2000, he captured the nomination of the Reform Party. If Trump wins the nomination, it will be his opponents who are driven from the Party. Bill Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, recently asked his Twitter followers to help him come up with the "name of the new party we'll have to start if Trump wins the G.O.P. nomination." Trump's supporters are active on social media: the first response to Kristol was "Sore Losers."

Those most opposed to Trump are Republicans with higher incomes and more education. A Republican Party under Trump might see a rise in its share of the white working-class vote, but it would also see an exodus of white-collar professionals. Peter Wehner, one of George W. Bush's senior aides, recently wrote in the *Times* that he couldn't support Trump under any circumstances.

"Mr. Trump's virulent combination of ignorance, emotional instability, demagoguery, solipsism and vindictiveness would do more than result in a failed presidency; it could very well lead to national catastrophe," he warned. "If Mr. Trump heads the Republican Party, it will no longer be a conservative party; it will be an angry, bigoted, populist one. Mr. Trump would represent a dramatic break with and a fundamental assault on the party's best traditions." Similarly, Michael Gerson, George W. Bush's longtime speechwriter, noted in the *Washington Post*, "If Trump were the nominee, the G.O.P. would cease to be," because "Trump would make the G.O.P. the party of racial and religious exclusion," and thus "break it to pieces."

Last Tuesday, Sarah Palin, the pre-Trump embodiment of populist nothingness in the Republican Party, endorsed Trump. The same day, seventy-four-year-old George Will said that if



"I'm O.K. Are you O.K.?"

the general election pitted Trump against Clinton, "this will be the first election since God knows when" in which "there is no real conservative candidate."

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Trump's rise is that the arguments from people like Kristol, Wehner, Gerson, and Will, who have spent their lives trying to define conservatism, have had so little impact. "Republicans Have Overestimated the Conservatism of the Base," blared a recent headline in *National Review* bemoaning the victory of Trump's populism. In *The Week*, conservative columnist Michael Brendan Dougherty recently wrote, "What so frightens the conservative movement about Trump's success is that he reveals just how thin the support for their ideas really is."

Even if Trump disappears, Trumpism won't. A billionaire who flaunts his wealth, Trump is thriving as a populist even at a time when the economy is growing and unemployment is low. Last week, *National Review* published twenty-two essays by leading activists and thinkers on the right, arguing that Trump wasn't a real conservative. Maybe not, but that appears not to matter to a large portion of the Republican electorate. Rather than deliver ideological lectures, the G.O.P. needs to find a candidate and an agenda that can realistically address the economic

anxieties of its base without succumbing to Trump-style bigotry.

After Trump's rally in Biloxi, I talked to Joanna Patterson, who is forty-four years old. She said that she and her husband, Paul, who is forty-five and used to watch Trump on "The Apprentice," are deeply religious Pentecostal Christians who follow the teachings of Christ's Twelve Apostles. "We don't believe that a woman should cut her hair. We're like Kim—"

"The one that wouldn't do the marriage licenses," her husband interjected.

"Kim Davis?" I asked, referring to the Kentucky official who refused to issue same-sex marriage licenses last year.

"Yes," Patterson said. "We're the same thing as her." Patterson said she can pick out other Apostolics, especially women, by the way they dress—long skirts, no makeup—and she was pleasantly surprised to see that there were many at the Trump event. She conceded that Trump was not religious and hadn't shown a commitment to any of the social issues she cared about. But she liked him because he showed "strength" and says "whatever he wants to say without having someone buffer it for him." She explained that forthrightness, more than any particular issue, was at the foundation of her own religion.

"We like raw truth," Patterson said. "Tell us what we need." ♦

# BABY DOE

*A political history of tragedy.*

BY JILL LEPORE

Last June, a woman walking her dog on Deer Island, in Boston Harbor, came across a black plastic garbage bag on the beach. Inside was a very little girl, dead. The woman called for help and collapsed in tears. Police searched the island; divers searched the water; a medical examiner collected the body. The little girl had dark eyes and pale skin and long brown hair. She weighed thirty pounds. She was wearing white-and-black polka-dot pants. She was wrapped in a zebra-striped fleece blanket. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said that no child matching her description had been reported missing. "Someone has to know who this child is," an official there said. But for a very long time no one did.

A forensic artist fed a morgue photograph into a computer and made a likeness, a dead child brought back to life. The Massachusetts State Police put the picture on its Facebook page. By the Fourth of July, more than twenty-four million people had looked at it, posting thirty-four thousand comments. Three days later, the number of visitors had risen to forty-five million. And still no one knew her name. Authorities began calling her Baby Doe.

Deer Island sits among more than thirty islands in Boston Harbor. English colonists named a lot of them for animals. There's a Sheep Island and a Calf Island, too. Deer Island used to be remote, but a hurricane in 1938 left a strip of sand behind, attaching the island to the town of Winthrop by a neck of land. There are windmills there now, and a state-of-the-art wastewater-treatment plant. When the body was found, work at the plant came to a standstill. "People were devastated," Susan Brazil says. Brazil works for the water authority, and she's also from Winthrop, a town whose population is predominantly white, working class, and Catholic. Brazil started collecting money. Everyone wanted to do some-

thing; no one knew what. "The photograph just ripped your heart out," she says. People from the town and workers at the plant, wanting to fold that little girl into their arms, began leaving flowers and notes and holding vigils. "She's our little girl," a priest said at a memorial Mass in July. "She belongs to us." Workers at the plant placed on the ground a sculpture of bronze: a fawn, like Bambi, curled up, sleeping, a baby doe.

Authorities pasted the computer-generated photograph on billboards all over the state, with a plea: "Did You Know Me? Please...tell the POLICE my NAME!" There was a number to call, and another to text. "Remember me? Then please tell the police!"

Remember her? Nearly everything about this story reminded me of something that happened during the Blizzard of 1978, when I was eleven. The snow began falling on February 5th. The next day, in Somerville, just outside Boston, Edward R. Gallison, thirty-five, came in from the storm and knocked two-year-old Jennifer Gallison into a chair. Or maybe he pushed her against a refrigerator. Or maybe she fell and hit her head. She'd been sick, with a fever of 104 or 105. Maybe pneumonia killed her. The facts never quite came out. After the little girl fell to the floor, her mother, Denise Gallison, twenty-two, wrapped her in a blanket and put her to bed. In the morning, Edward Gallison moved the bundle to an unheated storage room in the back of the second-floor apartment. He left the window open. The room filled with snow. Winter ended; the snow began to melt. Then, on Good Friday, Edward Gallison dressed his daughter in a snowsuit, hat, and boots and put her into a garbage bag. He carried the bag down the street and left it in a trash barrel in front of a statue of the Blessed Mother. The body of Jennifer Gallison was never found.

More than a hundred inches of snow

fell in Boston last winter, storm after storm. So the Blizzard of 1978 was on my mind when, not long after daffodils poked up through the last of the long-lingering snow, the lifeless body of a little girl was discovered in a trash bag on Deer Island, cast away.

Baby Doe had no fingerprints. The tide had damaged the skin on her hands. Her DNA didn't match the DNA of anyone in the F.B.I.'s database of missing children. The State Police sent two hundred strands of her hair, and one tooth, to a lab in Salt Lake City, to try to figure out where her drinking water came from. Pollen found on her clothes went to a lab in Houston. There was soot in her hair; it placed her as having lived in Boston. And still no one came forward to name her. The letters and toys left for her on Deer Island were getting ruined in the rain. Lenny Young, who works for the plant's Buildings and Grounds and keeps a photograph of his own daughter on his phone's home screen, started bringing them into a storeroom, for safekeeping. There are Teddy bears, for comfort; lions, for courage; and tiny deer, namesakes.

The loss of a child is an unbearable grief, the murder of a child an unthinkable atrocity. Thinking the unthinkable tends to have dreadful consequences. The Baby Doe story was covered by the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, and New England television news. It was picked up by CNN, *People*, the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, Fox News, and the *Guardian*. It had every element of a developing crusade: outrage, pity, and sanctimony. Historically, crusades begun in response to the murders of children have had terrible results. In 1979, a boy in New York City named Etan Patz disappeared; his father was a professional photographer; soon, photographs of missing children were being printed on milk cartons. There were claims, at the time, that fifty thousand children disappeared every year. The





*"Remember me?": three months passed before the body of Bella Bond, discovered in a trash bag in Boston Harbor, was identified.*

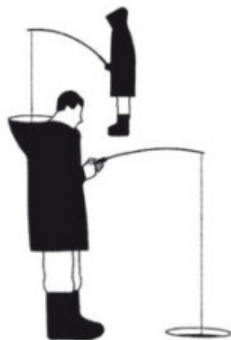
real number was less than three hundred. The Gallison story and stories of missing children had been hard for me to forget, partly because of those milk boxes but also because, in 1980, ABC-TV broadcast a one-hour documentary about the case called “Denise: The Tragedy of Child Abuse.” Facebook is the new milk box; the tragedy is the same.

The Baby Doe story has unfolded against a backdrop of controversy involving the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. In December, 2013, a five-year-old boy named Jeremiah Oliver was reported missing from his home in Fitchburg. He hadn’t been seen since September, but, despite the fact that the Massachusetts D.C.F. had been involved with the family since 2011, when it first received reports of the neglect of three children, then ages seven, five, and two, Jeremiah’s disappearance had not been noticed by his caseworkers. Governor Deval Patrick asked the Office of the Child Advocate to conduct an investigation. “How can a social worker not notice when a five-year-old boy on her caseload disappears?” the O.C.A. asked, in a report filed in January, 2014. That spring, the boy’s body was found in a suitcase by the side of a highway, and his mother and her boyfriend were arrested and charged with assault, kidnapping, and child endangerment; both pleaded not guilty. Patrick commissioned the Child Welfare League of America to conduct a review, led by Linda Spears, into the D.C.F. His administration, pressured by the state legislature, accepted the resignation of the D.C.F. commissioner, who had held the office for only a year.

Whatever has gone wrong in Massachusetts has gone far worse in other parts of the United States. Nineteen states (including Massachusetts) are being sued for their systems’ failure to protect children; Mississippi’s Division of Family and Children’s Services is struggling to avoid being put into receivership. Last year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked Massachusetts third best in the nation in the over-all well-being of children. The best is not good.

In January, 2015, when Charlie Baker

was inaugurated the new governor of Massachusetts, he named Spears as the new D.C.F. commissioner. She took office in February. Not long after that, a seven-year-old boy who was in the custody of his father, but whose case had been overseen by the D.C.F. for more than five months, was brought to the hospital with burns on his feet and bruises all over his body and weighing only thirty-eight pounds; he has been in a coma ever since. How had caseworkers not noticed that the boy was being beaten and starved? The D.C.F.’s investigation into the case concluded that the department has been “unable to successfully implement and sustain meaningful change over time.” Spears had been in office for barely four months when, in June, Baby Doe washed up on Deer Island in a plastic garbage bag as dark and as fathomless as the very bottom of the sea.



The overwhelming majority of children who die from abuse or neglect are under the age of four; roughly half are less than a year old. In September, 2015, the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, a “Spotlight”-style nonprofit, released a story called “Out of the Shadows: Shining Light on State Failures to Learn from Rising Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths,” reporting that a hundred and ten Massachusetts children died between 2009 and 2013 in circumstances suggesting abuse or neglect, and that a third of them had been under the care of the D.C.F. (This rate is the national average: across the country, about one in three children who die from maltreatment belongs to a family that had previously drawn the attention of child-protection services.) Long before anyone knew her name, it seemed all too likely that this would turn out to be the case with Baby Doe.

Even the best reporting, though, can’t help missing a feature of the story that can be seen only from the vantage of history. Child protection is trapped in a cycle of scandal and reform. The D.C.F. was established in 1980, as the Department of Social Services, in response to the Gallison case. It was renamed the Department of Children and Families

in 2008, under the Act Protecting Children in the Care of the Commonwealth, an omnibus reform that also created the Office of the Child Advocate, in response to the case of an eleven-year-old girl who was brought to an emergency room in a coma, having been severely beaten; one doctor said that her injuries were so grave it was as if she’d been in a high-speed car accident. Social workers had earlier investigated charges of abuse but had determined that the injuries were self-inflicted. The law came with virtually no new funding. (About the only mention of money, in the legislation itself, is this: “The department may pay a sum not to exceed \$1,100 for the funeral and burial of a child in its care.”) It was passed in the midst of both a global financial collapse and an opiate epidemic. From the time that the D.C.F. got its name until 2014, its budget was cut every year; adjusted for inflation, more than a hundred and thirty million dollars was slashed. (In the wake of Jeremiah Oliver’s death, money has begun to trickle back.)

Programs for the poor are poor programs. And they are made poorer when they fail, and when they are needed most. Natural disasters like blizzards, earthquakes, and hurricanes drive reform and the allocation of resources, leading to improvements in public safety. The tragic but ordinary deaths of people in situations in which people are likely to die don’t usually change policy. When someone dies in an ambulance, that death is not generally followed by an investigation into the qualifications of E.M.T.s. “We don’t stop funding FEMA when the economy gets bad,” Maria Mossaides pointed out, when we met. Mossaides, an attorney, was hired by Michael Dukakis in 1977 and moved into child welfare soon after the Gallison disaster. Deval Patrick had hoped that Mossaides would be willing to serve as D.C.F. commissioner. Instead, she accepted Baker’s offer to become the state’s new director of the Office of the Child Advocate. One feature of a scandal-reform cycle—“Kids die and heads roll,” she says—is a policy pendulum. “The pendulum has swung at least four or five times in the last forty years,” Mossaides says. It swings between family preservation (keeping kids with their family of origin) and removal (removing kids from



their homes and severing parental rights so that the kids can be adopted). “We inevitably have cases where we don’t get the safety assessment right,” Mossaides says. “Then you have the high-profile death, and the pendulum will swing in the opposite direction.” When Jeremiah Oliver was reported missing, the governor’s office was boasting that the number of children in the care of the state was down to seven thousand: family preservation was the priority. Two years later, that number has risen to ninety-two hundred, a record. “Pull every kid” is what Mossaides suspects D.C.F. workers are being told. “The only way that happens is social workers have become afraid to leave kids with their parents.”

This didn’t start in 2008 or even in 1980. The child-protection movement has origins in 1837, with “*Oliver Twist*,” Charles Dickens’s indictment of England’s Poor Laws. The policy pendulum was already so firmly in place by the eighteen-eighties that it was accurately described in a treatise called “*Children of the State*,” by Florence Davenport-Hill, an early advocate for foster care: “First we find the children placed in homes, but not safeguarded,” then “abuses are discovered” and the children are “in consequence massed together in some big institution” until there, too, still more abuses are discovered, and “in desperation they are dispersed again,” until, once again, abuses are discovered in homes, and the children are sent to institutions. The oscillation lately isn’t between foster homes and institutions but between reunification and termination of parental rights. The pattern remains the same.

Other patterns remain in place, too. Victorian child-savers enlisted public support by telling sensational stories involving the deaths of poor children, especially babies. It became a convention of the dead-baby story to suggest that poor women are not to be trusted with babies, and as a result the public favors rescuing children but not if it means helping women. As a rule, setting the interests of poor children against those of poor women leads to reforms that fail, which leads, a few years later, to another dead-baby story. This next time around, the reform itself is blamed for the death of the baby, and an opposite reform is proposed. It, too, fails. And then the cycle begins again.

“Baby farming,” a term coined in a British medical journal in 1867, was what Victorian doctors called it when desperately poor women paid even poorer women to take care of their babies, or, rather, doctors said, to deliberately kill them; many of the babies died of maltreatment, others of outright starvation. In 1871, the Infant Life Protection Society proposed legislation requiring childcare providers to be licensed by the state. The National Society for Women’s Suffrage formed a Committee for Amending the Law in Points Wherein It Is Injurious to Women, arguing not only that it would “legislate on matters affecting women without their consent” but also that it began “at the wrong end”: it failed to address or even to see the real problem—the political and eco-

nomic inequality of women. In New York in 1874, the *Times* reported that a girl named Mary Ellen Wilson was “rescued” from her home by a charity worker whose husband happened to be a newspaper reporter. The rescue was made possible with the help of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This and other cases led to the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It did for children what its sister organization did for animals. “Lists of ‘saved children’ joined those kept for ‘redeemed dogs,’” Judith Sealander reports in her jaundiced history, “*The Failed Century of the Child*.” Sealander argues that the dead-baby story proved so successful because infant and childhood mortality was falling, fast. “Before the early



nineteenth century, the average child was the dead child,” Sealander writes. “For most of human history, probably seven out of ten children did not live past the age of three.” If Victorian- and Progressive-era middle-class moralists were newly concerned about the dead and dying babies of the poor, it was partly because their own babies were, for the first time, not dying. And the more the children of the better-off were cherished, and pampered, the worse the treatment of the children of the poor appeared to be. In 1920, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children issued a pamphlet, aimed at well-to-do children, inviting them to join the society’s Junior Division but taking pains to protect them, even, from the pain of reading the stories of less fortunate children: “We cannot tell you much about our cases because they are too sad.”

Denise Gallison was born Denise Sousa in 1955. Less than two years later, her father was convicted of sexually assaulting her oldest sister, who was five, and all five of the Sousa children were placed in the care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Denise went straight into the hospital. She was eighteen months

old and had hardly ever been taken out of her crib: she was malnourished and unable to stand. From the hospital, she went into foster care; in the course of fifteen years, she was placed in eleven homes and institutions by eighteen social workers. In 1960, when she was four, the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare determined that she was “not adoption material,” because she was “socially, emotionally, and intellectually retarded.” In 1962, while she was in the New England Home for Little Wanderers, she was diagnosed as suffering from “maternal deprivation”; at the age of six, an evaluation determined, she was “not able to relate in a meaningful way to others.” One foster mother described her as “a very cunning, sadistic, malicious child.” At fourteen, she was sent to a residential school for “mildly retarded” children, where she was given a hundred milligrams of Mellaril (an antipsychotic) and twenty-five milligrams of Elavil (an antidepressant) three times a day.

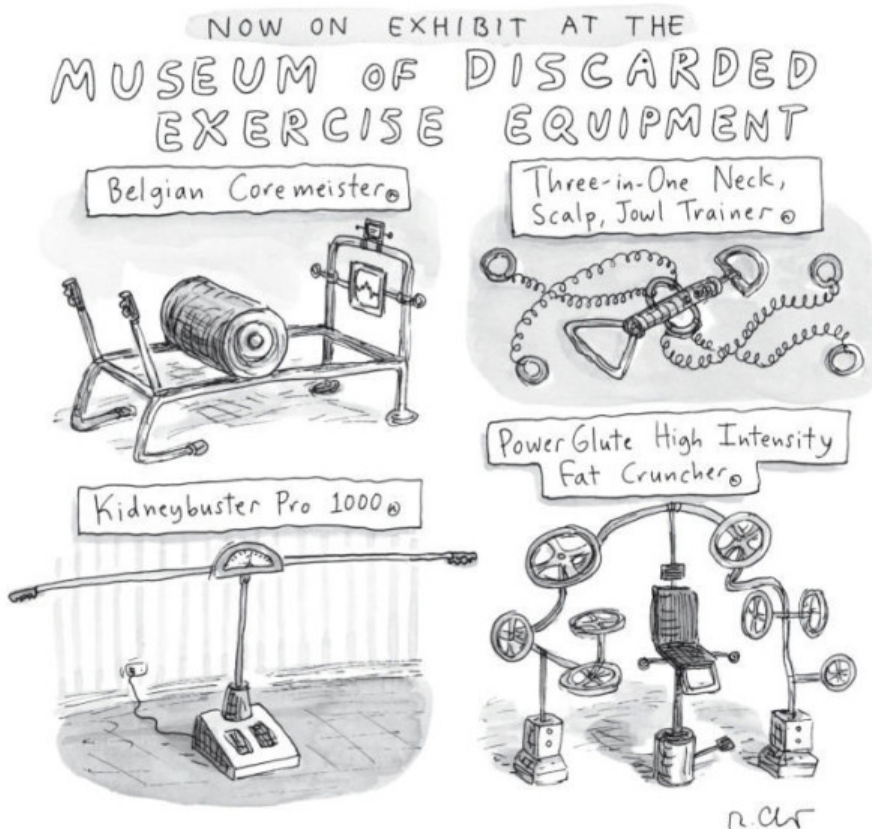
The modern era in child protection began with the rediscovery of child abuse, in July, 1962, when the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a paper called “The Battered-Child Syndrome.” The paper’s lead writer was a pediatrician

named C. Henry Kempe. Kempe reported on what he characterized as an invisible epidemic. Only with X-ray evidence could doctors be convinced that the injuries seen in very young children—most of those affected were younger than three—were caused by beatings. Kempe wrote, “The bones tell a story the child is too young or too frightened to tell.”

In 1962, some ten thousand reports of child abuse were filed nationally. Between 1963 and 1967, all fifty states passed child-abuse-reporting laws. By 1976, the number of reports had risen to 669,000; in 1980, it was 1,154,000; it’s currently about three million. The staggering effect of Kempe’s article raises a question: Why, for all the attention paid to preventing cruelty to children during the Victorian and the Progressive eras, did interest fall off so dramatically between 1920 and 1962? There’s no reason to believe that the mistreatment of children declined during those years. And X-ray evidence of the beating of children had been reported by a radiologist named John Caffey in 1946, in a somewhat oblique journal article called “Multiple Fractures in Long Bones of Infants,” and more squarely, by other researchers, in 1955. What was new, in 1962, was the extent and nature of the press coverage. Kempe’s article was picked up by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Between 1950 and 1980, the historian Barbara Nelson has reported, child abuse was the subject of more than six hundred articles in the *Times* alone.

Why was the press so interested in child abuse after 1962? One reason is that the unseen catastrophe was a mainstay of the early-sixties exposé. A month before “The Battered-Child Syndrome” appeared, *The New Yorker* serialized Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring.” Seven months later, the magazine published “Our Invisible Poor,” by Dwight Macdonald. Carson ushered in the modern environmental movement; Macdonald is credited with helping to launch the War on Poverty. And Kempe launched the campaign against child abuse.

Still, that doesn’t quite explain the relative lack of interest in child abuse in the twenties, thirties, forties, or fifties. This is nicely addressed by Macdonald. “There is a monotony about the injustices suffered by the poor that perhaps accounts for the lack of interest the rest of society shows in them,” he wrote. “Everything seems





to go wrong with them. They never win. It's just boring." Generally, what has made the particular misery of babies and young children less boring is the attention paid to it by female political writers. Public attention to the welfare of poor children, the historian Linda Gordon has argued, coincides with eras in which women have had a strong political voice. It was therefore high when women were most actively fighting for the right to vote (from 1870 to 1920) and during the women's-liberation movement (from 1961 to 1975).

Interest in the welfare of children in the sixties was also part of that decade's ambition to end poverty. But the triumph of the report-abuse model marked the abandonment of that ambition. The turn came in the early nineteen-seventies. In 1971, Congress considered the Comprehensive Child Development Act, a last piece of Great Society legislation, an entitlement program providing for universal preschool education (referred to, during congressional debate, as "developmental day care"), with tuition scaled to a family's ability to pay. The bill's lead sponsor was Walter Mondale, a senator with Presidential aspirations who was the chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Youth and who had drafted childcare legislation as early as 1961. Supporters of the Child Development Act cast childcare as a civil-rights measure. Not since the 1964 Civil Rights Act had a bill been subject to more intense lobbying. The bipartisan vote in the Senate was an overwhelming 63-17; the victory in the House was razor-thin, 186-183. In December, 1971, Nixon, who was running for reelection on the back of a strategy that involved an appeal to conservatives, vetoed the bill. Pat Buchanan drafted Nixon's veto message, in which Nixon said that "for the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing."

Conservatives argue that Great Society anti-poverty programs created a "culture of dependency." It's undeniably true that the War on Poverty has been a failure. But the abandonment of a federal childcare program made the independence of poor women impossible. What liberals sought, in its place, has proved disastrous. Mondale called Nixon's veto message "cruel, hysterical, and



*"This is our design team and their over-the-top looks."*

false." He then made a fateful decision: he crafted a piece of legislation that the White House would be unable to veto. "Not even Richard Nixon is in favor of child abuse!" Mondale said. Nixon had defended his veto of the childcare legislation on the ground that it had not been subject to sufficient debate or hearing. Mondale was determined that the same would not be said of the child-abuse legislation. In 1973, his subcommittee convened four days of public hearings in three cities. The lesson Mondale learned from Nixon's veto was that the care of children had to be distanced from the care of the poor. Mondale insisted, again and again—and against all evidence—that child abuse has nothing to do with poverty. "This is not a poverty problem," he said. "This is a national problem."

Out of those hearings came the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, signed by Nixon in January, 1974. Caring for children came to mean emergency intervention, to stop them from being murdered—Victorian infant life protection, revisited—withstanding the glaring fact that federally funded child-protective services that handle three million reports of child abuse every year represent a far, far more intrusive form of state authority over family life than federally subsidized childcare could ever have constituted. Meanwhile, the idea

that the government might have a different kind of obligation to poor mothers and their children slowly faded away.

On April 29, 1974, eighteen-year-old Denise Sousa was discharged from the care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She was two weeks pregnant. She eventually married the baby's father, Edward Gallison. After her son Eddie was born, premature, at twenty-nine weeks, in November, 1974, she told a nurse that she wanted to kill him.

In the mid-seventies, the soaring number of reports of child abuse and the new federal legislation meant that state Departments of Public Welfare needed more social workers. Most states, weakened by the recession, had scant funds to train new social workers, little money to pay them, and not the least inclination to value them. Toll-booth workers earned more.

In 1974, the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare was reorganized, and long-standing employees, after passing an exam weighted for seniority, were offered the opportunity to move into social work with little consideration of their experience. "You didn't need a college degree until 1980," Eleanor Dowd explained. Dowd helped work on the state's report about the Gallison case. (She's the acting head of a private agency, Cambridge Family and Children's Service, which was

founded in 1873.) Like Mossaides, she felt confident, when she started out in 1968, that childhood poverty was about to be eradicated. By the time of the Gallison investigation, a great deal had changed. "We learned a lot from the War on Poverty that we never used," Dowd says. "We took a wrong turn somewhere."

By March of 1975, Denise Gallison was pregnant again. A case record was kept by visiting nurses and workers from Catholic Charities. One of them arranged for her to have an abortion. On the day the abortion was scheduled, a worker wrote in the case record, "EXTREMELY HOSTILE, BELLIGERENT AND THREATENING—states no one understands her—no longer wants abortion."

Jennifer Gallison was born on September 13, 1975. Ten days later, a nurse visited the Gallisons' apartment and found that the baby and her ten-month-old brother, Eddie, "were without diapers and were wrapped in rags." Eddie weighed only ten pounds, could not sit up, and had no hair on the back of his head, apparently because he had so seldom been lifted out of his crib. In October, 1975, Catholic Charities filed a petition to remove the children from their parents' custody. (Only a court has this authority.) The judge refused to grant the petition, but Denise Gallison then called the Department of Public Welfare and asked that the children be taken away from her. "I couldn't take the pressure," she later said. "Plus, I was on speed." The babies were placed in different foster homes. The department conducted an intake study: "Treatment for mother has been recommended. This appears to be essential if any serious plans for reuniting this family are contemplated."

In April, 1976, a social worker named Carolyn Punch was assigned to the Gallison case. Punch had started at the department in 1951, as a typist. She had no social-work experience or training, but during the 1974 departmental reorganization she was promoted to clinical social worker, based on her seniority. Her supervisor started working at the agency in 1945, as a stenographer. She had no social-work experience, either: her training, when she switched from stenography to social work, in 1974, consisted of watching a film.

"There is no reason why her children should not be reunited with their par-

ents," Punch wrote in Denise Gallison's case record in October, 1976. Since the children had been taken from their care, more than a year before, Denise and Edward Gallison had almost invariably failed to turn up for their appointments to visit them. Punch recommended weekend, overnight visits. Catherine Holbrook, Eddie's foster mother, who was keen to adopt him, reported that after one such visit Eddie had to be hospitalized. At a hearing on October 31, 1977, Punch recommended that the children be returned to their parents. (At no hearing did the children have a legal representative.) The court ordered the children returned, with the stipulation

that the family be followed closely. No one in the Department of Public Welfare ever saw Jennifer Gallison again. The blizzard came in February. In an assessment filed on April 28, 1978, an assistant director reported that Denise Gallison's daughter weighed twenty-nine pounds: "Mother describes her as getting tall and slender 'like her father.'" By then, Jennifer Gallison had been dead for two and a half months.

The break in the Baby Doe case came in September, 2015, when a man named Michael Sprinsky told his sister that he believed he knew the girl in the photograph, and his sister told

## .50-CAL. GUNNER

1.

All day I aim at date palms.

The hood's covered  
with dried stains: dip, coffee

I've spit. Dalton always yelling from the hole,  
Not on my truck, dick.

Dust, here.

Dust there.  
How many duds don't blow,

I don't know. Inside the Kevlar another song  
stuck. Even over

the constant mosque music.

I'm into having sex.  
Not into making love. (But I'm not

having. Not making ...  
Dalton says it's my anthem.)

2.

My wish: to make Devices

Exploded

Improvised.

I keep both thumbs on the butterfly.



This camouflage keeps  
     my vitals very much part  
 of the sand I stare down all day. Lt. says,  
     The Fifty should make people unhappy.

At home, they don't know all I do  
 is aim at date palms.

3.

Been hit with a few shells.  
 But I don't walk with a limp. (But mostly

we drive. Mostly,  
 we drive ...

    And I aim at date palms.)

    I saw what it said  
 in all that fine print

    below Mission

    Accomplished: accomplished,  
 of course, but please send

        four thousand (plus)  
         body bags.

    Bring them back, please.  
     No empties.

—*Hugh Martin*

the police. Sprinsky knew a woman from Dorchester named Rachel Bond, who had a baby named Bella. When Bella disappeared, Bond had at first told Sprinsky that her baby had been taken away by the D.C.F. but later admitted that the baby was dead: she said that her boyfriend, Michael McCarthy, had killed her. Bond and McCarthy were arrested.

McCarthy told the police that he had no idea what happened to Bella Bond and that he believed she'd been taken into custody by the D.C.F. Bond told a different story. She said that, after she asked McCarthy to quiet the baby, he killed her by punching her in her

stomach. She said that he told her he'd kill her if she reported her daughter's death and that McCarthy put the body in a trash bag and shoved it into the refrigerator. Bond also told the police that she and McCarthy then drove to his father's plumbing business, where they got weights, which they put into a duffel bag, along with the trash bag, and dropped it into the harbor from a cruise-ship terminal in South Boston; the tide carried the trash bag to Deer Island.

Bond had used heroin just a few days before her arrest. During her arraignment, at Dorchester Municipal Court, in September, Bond, wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, looked distant, confused, and

dissociative. "I hope you rot in hell!" a woman screamed during the proceedings. Also at the arraignment was the baby's father, Joseph Amoroso. Amoroso, thirty-two, has a long criminal record. He knew about the baby but had never met her. "I hold D.C.F. responsible for a lot of this," he told reporters on the courthouse steps. In an on-camera interview with the Boston *Herald*, he said, "My poor little angel Bella's life was taken from her by a monster!"

On Facebook, people began calling Rachel Bond a "momster." The Governor held a press conference, pledging to transform child protection. Unfortunately, nothing could be worse for the prospects of reform than a high-profile trial.

On May 12, 1978, Carolyn Punch knocked on the door of the Gallisons' apartment building. Denise Gallison said that the children weren't at home, but Punch could hear a child crying upstairs. Punch returned with two Somerville police officers. Jennifer was nowhere to be found, but Eddie, three, was alone, strapped into a chair. His face had been so badly beaten that he no longer had an upper lip. Denise Gallison later said that Eddie had asked about his sister. "'Where's Jenny?' he kept asking . . . and I couldn't take it, so I just started beating him." A doctor at Somerville Hospital said that, aside from having been burned with cigarettes, the boy's buttocks had been flayed so repeatedly that they were "like leather." It was a month before he was well enough to leave the hospital. Denise Gallison told the police that her husband had put her daughter in a trash bag. The police suspected that the bag had been picked up with the rest of the city's trash and dumped into a furnace that supplied steam for a General Electric plant.

Denise and Edward Gallison were arrested and charged with assault and manslaughter. Denise Gallison was pregnant with her third child.

On May 22nd, the Massachusetts legislature opened hearings into the Department of Public Welfare's handling of the Gallison case. "I lay the blame for the death of Jennifer Gallison directly on the Dukakis administration's policy, since 1975, that human services



*"Genius is ten per cent inspiration, ninety per cent being the first person on earth."*

are expendable in a time of fiscal crisis," the chairman of the Senate's Human Services Committee said. The problem, Barney Frank pointed out, was that "the beneficiaries of this money—the children—don't vote." Dukakis had been a comfort during the blizzard, but he was heartbroken during the Gallison disaster. It would take "the wisdom of Solomon" to know what to do about the thousands of reports of abuse the state received each year, he said: "Whether the state should take a child away from his parents is an extremely difficult and very lonely decision."

Dukakis's administration appointed a fact-finding committee to investigate. Its report revealed that no one at the Department of Public Welfare had ever looked up Denise Gallison's own case file. In 1978 and 1979, Denise and Edward Gallison were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to prison. The fact-finding committee recommended the establishment of "a separate, adequately funded, adequately staffed Department of Social Services."

"The first commissioner of the new department, child psychologist Mary Jane England, is a realist in this regard," the *Boston Globe* reported in the summer of 1980. "'Children will continue to die,' she said recently, bluntly ad-

ressing the major challenge and the most desperate problem facing the new department. 'What we want to do is reduce the chances of that happening.'"

That hasn't come to pass. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of infants murdered, per hundred thousand infants in the population, rose from 5.8 to 9.1. Other measures are even more troubling. Today, the United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of any nation in the developed world. Then, there is the matter of the criminal-justice system. A study conducted last year by Citizens for Juvenile Justice found that seventy-two per cent of youths in the Massachusetts juvenile-justice system had been involved with the D.C.F.; fifty-seven per cent of boys and fifty-nine per cent of girls had their first involvement before the age of five; more than forty per cent had their first involvement before the age of three. The children in both systems are disproportionately nonwhite. The problem isn't only that the kinds of family that attract D.C.F. involvement tend to raise children who might later have trouble with the law; it's that D.C.F. involvement itself "can increase the likelihood of future delinquent activity." The system has contributed to the establishment of a juvenile version

of the carceral state, a birth-to-prison pipeline. It is outrageously expensive, devastatingly ineffective, and profoundly unjust.

Rachelle Bond was born in 1975; she's exactly the age Jennifer Gallison would be if she were still alive. She grew up in Acton and Fitchburg, with her mother; she never knew her father. Bond and her only sibling, a sister, Tamera Bond, say that they were both beaten and sexually abused as children. Rachelle Bond's first run-in with the law was in 1994, when she was eighteen. She has been incarcerated no fewer than twelve times since, including for prostitution, and has a long history of drug use. She had her first child in 2000, and another soon after. Following reports of neglect, the D.C.F. removed both children from her care, and the state eventually terminated her parental rights. She was arrested again in 2008 and released to a residential program. She has been the recipient of a great many social services, after-the-fact interventions.

She got pregnant at the end of 2011, while living in a tent in Occupy Boston. She spent much of her pregnancy in prison. Bella Bond was born in August, 2012, when her mother was living in a homeless shelter. Reports that Bond was neglecting the baby led to D.C.F. involvement for the first five months of Bella's life, and then again in June, 2013, when Bella was ten months old. The D.C.F. closed the case in September, 2013. (Instead of conducting a new assessment, caseworkers at the D.C.F. had copied into Rachelle Bond's file information from an assessment conducted in 2006.) The next month, Rachelle Bond left the homeless shelter and moved into a subsidized apartment.

After her arrest last fall, reporters and a torch-bearing public trawled the Internet for information about her. She'd had a Facebook page. She'd posted dozens of pictures of Bella, and videos, too. Bella in pigtails and purple footie pajamas, Bella in a topknot and blue jeans, Bella with a Dora the Explorer puzzle, Bella at her Hello Kitty-themed birthday, the day she turned two. People began bringing to Deer Island new toys, Hello Kittys, and new notes: "We will *never* forget you, Bella."



Bond's attorney is Janice Bassil, who has been involved in many of Boston's most high-profile trials. She helped defend John Salvi, who, in 1994, killed two women at a Planned Parenthood clinic. In September, she got a call from the state asking her if she'd be willing to represent either McCarthy or Bond. "They said, 'Who do you want?' And I said, 'I'll take the woman,'" Bassil said.

A few years ago, Bassil successfully defended a woman who had murdered her two children. She used an insanity defense, which very seldom works. "My goal was to tell her whole life story so the jury would have some empathy," Bassil told me. Her approach to Bond's defense is likely to be both the same and different. She'll tell her whole life story, emphasizing the eight years she spent living on the streets. "She lived under a bridge," Bassil told me. "You live under a bridge and tell me how well you'd cope." Under the circumstances, she'll probably say, Bond was the best mother she could have been. Bassil might talk, too, about the history of the provision of services to poor mothers and poor children. "When I started as a Massachusetts public defender, in 1978, the year of Gallison, the entire front row in court was filled with people from programs who were there to step up and say, 'Judge, we can offer a bed or clinical services.' And then that disappeared. By the mid-nineteen-eighties, that was gone." Denise Gallison's attorneys tried, and failed, to have details from Gallison's own childhood entered as evidence, but "the law has opened up there," Bassil says. "Battered-women's syndrome didn't exist when Denise Gallison was being tried." I asked Bassil if the public's embrace of Bella Bond would make defending her client more difficult. Bassil shook her head. "The reason there are those pictures and videos," she said, her voice steadily rising, as if she were addressing the jury, "is because *her mother took them because her mother loved her.*"

In October, when Bond and McCarthy appeared in Dorchester Municipal Court, television trucks parked outside the courthouse raised their antennae until they towered over the American flag fluttering from a pole on the courthouse lawn. Inside, Bond shuffled into

the dock, sheltered behind glass. She hid her face with her hair. (In prison, inmates shout "Baby killer!" whenever she leaves her cell.) Bassil asked for a second autopsy; the assistant district attorney didn't object; the judge granted the request; court adjourned. The bailiff cried, "God save the Commonwealth."

A grand jury was called. All fall, it met to weigh evidence: text messages, cell-phone records, DNA. On November 17th, while the grand jury deliberated in secret, Governor Baker held a press conference at the State House. "There's nothing more important than the safety and security of our kids," he said, echoing Dukakis, announcing a new set of D.C.F. policies. Three days later, the Office of the Child Advocate released its final report, urging a slate of reforms. "Support cannot just come during crises," Mossaides's office warned.

There's no doubt that the proposed reforms are well intended. And there is little doubt that they will fail.

Linda Spears grew up in Rhode Island; her father, a Narragansett Indian, was an engineer; her mother was a child-protection worker. Spears got her first job in 1979, when states all over the country were reshaping social services to manage the skyrocketing number of reports of child abuse. "My first day, I walked into my office, in a basement, and there was a box of cases on my desk. I did my first removal on day three," Spears told me when we met at her office. In the nineteen-eighties, she grew interested in policy. "It struck me that the problems that workers face on the front line could not be solved on the front line," she says. In 1992, she went to Washington, to work for the Child Welfare League, where she performed assessments on local and state agencies and saw a lot of reforms put into place. The problem, she says, is that they never hold for long; they're undermined by budget cuts.

Spears believes that responsibility for the scandal-reform cycle lies not only with the press and with legislators but with the child-protection movement itself. "Historically, we sounded only alarms," she says. "Every message was

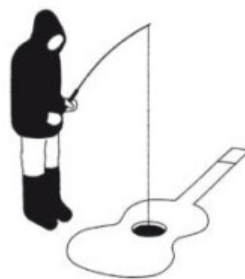
'It's horrible! It's horrible! It's worse than ever!' So now all we hear are different alarms: 'The system doesn't work! Poor families are broken families!'"

The newest regime in child protection is the quantitative analysis of risk. "We have risk-assessment tools that we've never had before," Spears says. (One of the first changes she made was to expand a program to distribute twenty-four hundred iPads to field workers.) "At the end of the day, you're talking about, one, trying to predict human behavior and, two, matching resources to those predictions," Spears says. "Some families, where there's an alcoholic parent, the family is less than perfect, but the kids are O.K., they're really O.K. Another family with the same kind of parent, and less than perfect, and no one is functioning."

The murky science of risk assessment relies on attempts to quantify "trauma" and "adversity," which, on the one hand, are meaningful clinical concepts but, on the other hand, are proxy terms for poverty. (And, worryingly, the study of trauma has both a dubious intellectual history and an abysmal track record, not least because of its role in the sexual-abuse scandals of the eighties and the recovered-memory travesty of the nineties.) Vincent Felitti, the longtime head of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Kaiser Permanente, in California, is one of the principal investigators in a body of work on adverse childhood experiences, or ACE. The ACE study is a collaboration of Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Dis-

ease Control. In 1985, Felitti launched a weight-loss program for patients at Kaiser Permanente and developed a theory that obesity in adulthood was an indicator of abuse in childhood. Felitti and Robert Anda, of the C.D.C., then designed a study to trace the influence

of childhood experiences on adult illness and death. After completing questionnaires about their childhoods, more than seventeen thousand Kaiser Permanente patients were assigned an "ACE score," from zero to ten, a tally of the kinds of adversity experienced before the age of eighteen. The ten adverse childhood experiences are emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect;



violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, incarceration, or mental illness within the family; and having been raised by anyone other than two biological parents. The study is ongoing, but early reports assert that ACE scores are predictive. For instance, “compared to persons with an ACE score of 0, those with an ACE score of 4 or more were twice as likely to be smokers, 12 times more likely to have attempted suicide, 7 times more likely to be alcoholic, and 10 times more likely to have injected street drugs.”

The noble dream here is that, if only child-protective agencies collected better data and used better algorithms, children would no longer be beaten or killed. Meanwhile, there is good reason to worry that the ACE score is the new I.Q., a deterministic label that is being used to sort children into those who can be helped and those who can't. And, for all the knowledge gained, the medicalization of misery is yet another way to avoid talking about impoverishment, destitution, and inequality. “Adverse outcomes?” Spears asks. “Adverse outcomes are what happen to poor kids.”

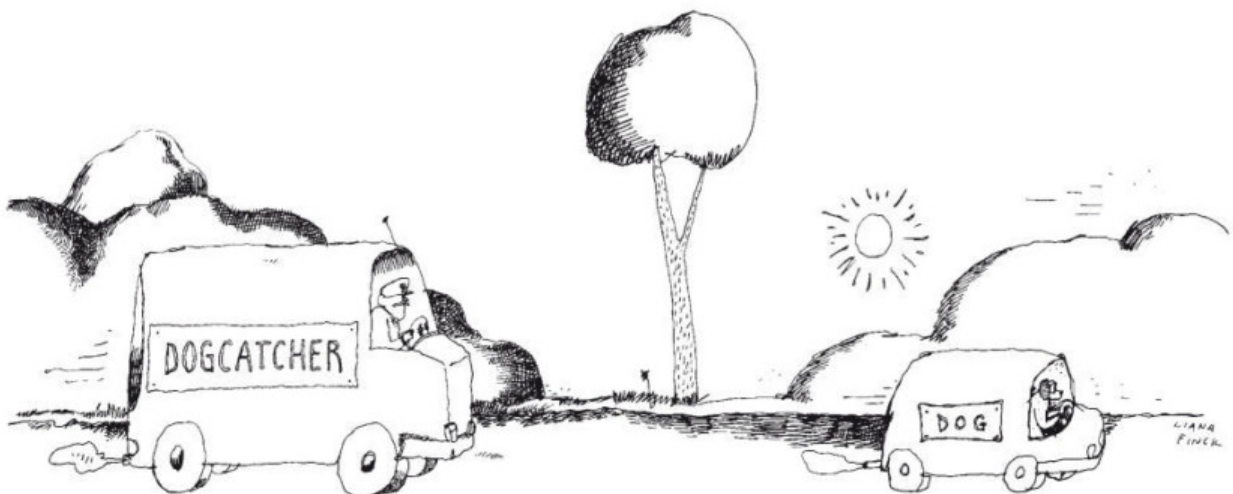
**T**he tragedy of the child-welfare system lies, unnoticed, at the bottom of the chasm that divides American politics. On the right, in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, Victorian child-saving was reborn as the pro-life movement, complete with the dead-baby exposé, right down to last year's Planned Parenthood videos of “baby parts”: its concern with the lives of children begins with conception but ends with birth. On the left, feminists have

generally aligned with the report-abuse regime, rather than serving as critics of it: when battered-woman syndrome followed battered-child syndrome, the recovery of trauma became feminist dogma. During the decades in which the right and the left battled over abortion, a whole raft of programs designed to prevent the neglect of young children were being dismantled. “In 1980, with the remnants of the poverty programs, you had some locally based or even neighborhood-based programs still in place,” Dowd says. Little of that exists anymore, and programs aimed at prevention have proved impossible to rebuild. “Agencies have tried and tried to get closer to a prevention model, but it's just not how the field is set up,” Spears told me. In the rare instances when states establish prevention programs, she says, they can't sustain them: “When budget cuts come, you can cut prevention but you can't cut intervention.” Presumably, preventing abuse and neglect by providing family-support services would reduce the numbers of children in the juvenile-justice system and in the adult-justice system, too. “If you could do it, the savings would be enormous,” Spears says.

Could you do it? A glimpse of what might have been, if the child-welfare path chosen in the nineteen-seventies had been anti-poverty instead of anti-abuse, and based in prevention instead of intervention, is a program called *Minding the Baby*, run jointly by the Yale Child Study Center and Yale's School of Nursing. Founded in 2001 by Arietta Slade, a clinical psychologist, Lois Sadler, a pediatric nurse prac-

titioner, and Linda Mayes, a professor of epidemiology, pediatrics, and psychology, the program offers services to poor, first-time mothers between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. The mothers, who are identified by community health centers, volunteer to participate. From pregnancy through the child's second birthday, a pediatric nurse practitioner and a clinical social worker take turns making frequent home visits. They provide health care, promote development, and support mental health, taking on, to some degree, the role of a kind of grandmother, teaching young mothers how to understand what their babies are saying to them by being curious, and reading cues. This approach is known as reflective parenting. “*Minding the baby*” is meant to evoke a whole set of skills: how to mind your baby, how to keep your baby in mind, and how to know your baby's mind. A mother tries to nurse her baby; the baby turns his head away; the mother feels rejected, and angry. The nurse might say, “I wonder why he's doing that?” And then she might help the mother puzzle out what the baby might be feeling or thinking. She might suggest, “Sometimes a baby turns away when he needs a rest. Sometimes moms need a rest, too!”

Tanika Simpson is *Minding the Baby*'s clinical social worker. “We are practicing this model in a way that's different from how we've been trained,” she told me. She sometimes works with Connecticut's D.C.F. “From a policy perspective, people want something that's quick and clean, to assess risk. But this is messy. And it's never going to be quick and clean. I've worked with D.C.F.





workers. They want to work differently. I'm not sure that their infrastructure supports them to work differently." Before *Minding the Baby*, Simpson worked with young children. She says, "Parents would bring in their three-year-olds and they'd already given up on them." Many of the young mothers who are served by *Minding the Baby* have had experience with child-protection services as children, and they've got good reason to be anxious about visiting social workers. Simpson says that by the time one of her clients' babies is born she's been visiting with that client for months. Her first meeting with the baby is in the hospital, soon after the child's birth. "It never fails to move me that we will go into that hospital room, and she will hand us her baby," Simpson says, a catch in her voice. "The trust there, it blows me away, every time."

"We don't see things quite the way the Department of Children and Families sees them," Arietta Slade told me. "Our approach is different. From many, many perspectives, the relationship between the mother and child and between the father and child is where change resides. That's where the potential is; it's where the growth can be. It's also where the devastation can be. But it's really where you can work."

*Minding the Baby* has completed studies of the mothers and babies who received care between 2002 and 2014, as compared with control groups. Results include higher rates of on-time pediatric immunization, stronger mother-child bonds, longer spacing between child-births, and lower rates of child-protection referrals. Support for the studies was provided by grants from the National Institutes of Health and from a number of foundations. Much of that money supports research; it does not—and was never intended to—support the provision of services. In one of the sadder ironies in a field desperately in need of hope, with the clinical trials completed, and the value of prevention demonstrated, sources of funding for programs based on that model are few and far between.

But child welfare isn't driven by studies like the studies conducted by the *Minding the Baby* program. Child welfare is driven by stories like the death of Baby Doe. A story less



*"The corn hasn't quite matured if it's still reading Ayn Rand."*

likely to lead to public support for better programs for poor mothers is difficult to imagine.

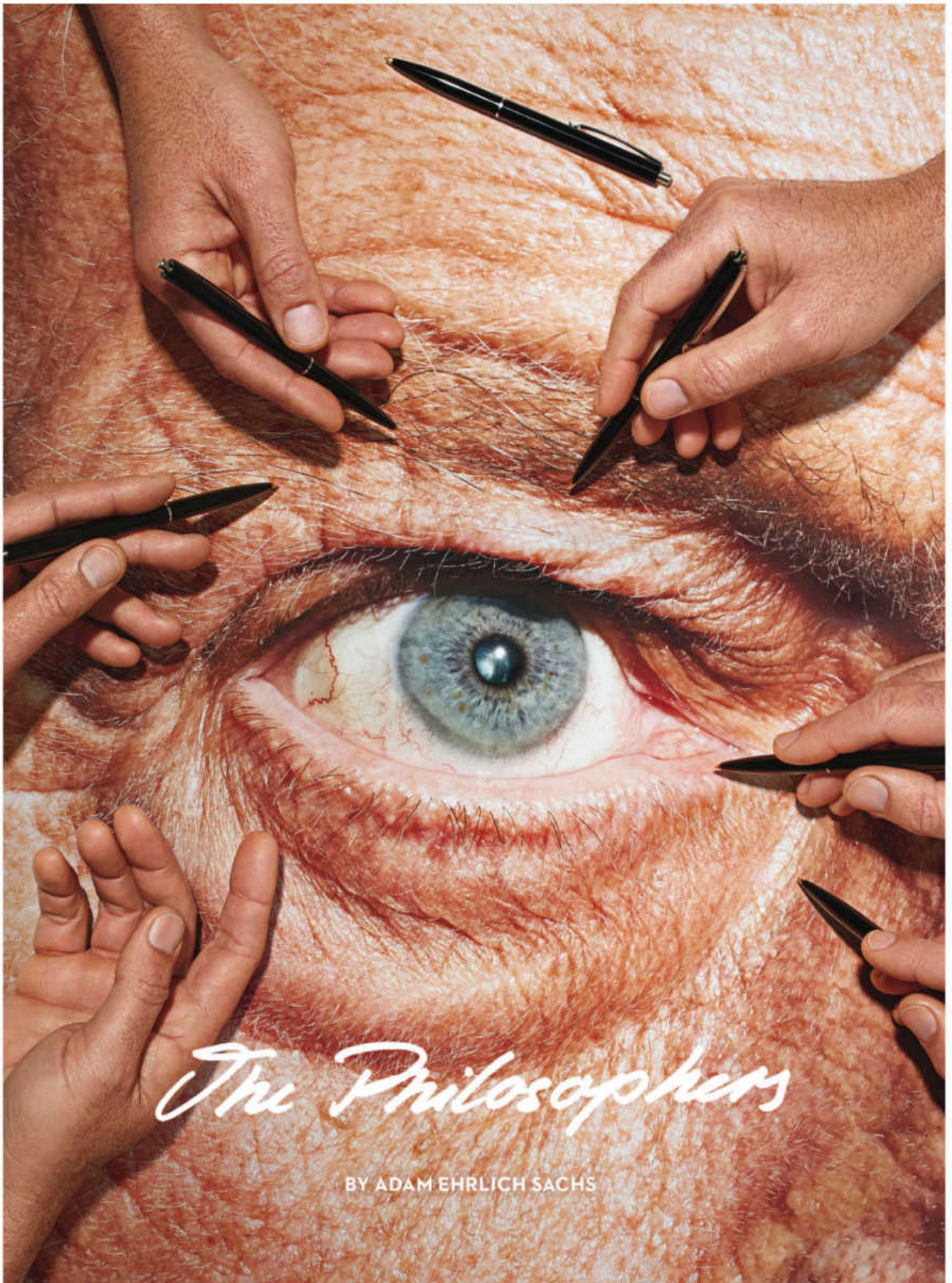
In the first week of January, Rachelle Bond was arraigned in Suffolk Superior Court, in downtown Boston. She was wearing that same gray hooded sweatshirt, and still hiding behind her hair. Cameras clicked; reporters live-tweeted; Bond wept. Bassil placed an arm around her. The grand jury had issued indictments charging McCarthy with murder, and Bond as an accessory after the fact. David Deakin, the assistant district attorney prosecuting the case, asked for bail to be set at a million dollars, cash. Bassil suggested that the amount was ridiculous—"Any bail would hold her"—but she didn't contest it. Deakin summarized the case, at length. In Bond's apartment, "a cadaver-trained dog alerted to the hinge area of the refrigerator." In the harbor, divers found the duffel bag and the weights. He recounted Bond's criminal history. Bassil tried to object, suggesting that, since she hadn't contested the bail, there was no need to rehearse these details and that Deakin's perfor-

mance was purely for the cameras. Bond faces another charge, too, for larceny, and Deakin lingered over it. It alleges that Bond collected just under fourteen hundred dollars in charity and government assistance intended for her daughter, long after her daughter was dead.

Both Bond and McCarthy are pleading not guilty. Pretrial hearings begin later this month. During the grand-jury proceedings, prosecutors entered as evidence a letter Bond received from the Boston Globe Santa Holiday Fund. Baby killer steals from Claus? More and worse details will come out. But Bond might not face trial; it's likely that she'll testify against McCarthy, possibly in exchange for a reduced sentence. For child welfare, there will be no mercy.

Two days after Thanksgiving, Rachelle Bond's daughter was buried in Winthrop Cemetery. Baby Doe has got a name. Poverty remains unspeakable. By New Year's Day, snow had blanketed her grave. So far, the winter has been mild, but harsher conditions are predicted. A blizzard is on the way. ♦







A philosopher had spent his lifetime pondering the nature of knowledge and was ready at last to write down his conclusions. He took out a sheet of white paper and a pen. But he noticed, upon lifting the pen, a slight tremor in his hand. Hours later he was diagnosed with a neuromuscular disorder that promptly began ravaging his body, though apparently, according to the doctor, not his mind.

He lost the use of his muscles one by one, first in his fingers, then in his toes, then in his arms, then in his legs. Soon he could only whisper weakly and flutter his right eyelid. Just before losing the power of speech entirely, he designed with his son's help a system by which he could communicate, through twitches and blinks, the letters of the alphabet.

Then the philosopher fell silent.

He and his son embarked upon the writing of his book on knowledge. The father blinked or twitched his right eyelid; the son wrote down the corresponding letter. Progress was extraordinarily slow. After twenty years, they had written a hundred pages. Then, one morning, when the son picked up the pen, he noticed a slight tremor in his hand. He was diagnosed with the same neuromuscular disorder as his father—it was, naturally, hereditary—and began losing the use of his muscles, too. Soon he could only whisper weakly and manipulate his tongue. He and his own son designed a system by which he could communicate, by tapping his teeth with his tongue, the letters of the alphabet, and then he, too, fell silent.

The writing continued, though the pace, already indescribably slow, slowed even further. The grandfather blinked or twitched his right eyelid, his son tapped a tooth with his tongue, and the grandson wrote down the corresponding letter. After another twenty years, they had written another ten pages on the nature of knowledge.

One morning, the grandson noticed a slight tremor in his hand. He knew instantly what it meant. He didn't even bother getting the diagnosis. His final surviving muscle was his left eyebrow, and by raising or lowering it just so he could communicate letters to his son. Again the pace slowed by an order of magnitude. The opportunities for error multiplied. Then his son was stricken, then his son's son, then his son's son's son, and then his

son's son's son's son, who is my father.

We cram into our ancestral sickroom. It is dark and cold: we keep the blinds lowered and the heat down owing to our hereditary light sensitivity and our hereditary heat intolerance, both of which are in fact unrelated to our hereditary neuromuscular disorder. Someone tries to cough but cannot. I sit at the desk and await the next letter, which can take months to arrive. The philosopher blinks or twitches his right eyelid; his son taps a tooth with his tongue; his son raises or lowers his left eyebrow; his son sucks on his upper or lower lip; his son flares a nostril; my grandfather blinks or twitches his left eyelid; my father taps a tooth with his tongue; and I write down the letter. In the past eleven years, I've written down the following: CC CONCEPT CCCCCAAAAACCCCCCCC CC PCCCCC PCCCCC PC CCCCCC.

What to make of this? Perhaps the philosopher has lost his mind. Perhaps there's been a disruption in our system of twitches and blinks and tooth-tapping and lip-sucking by which a letter is transmitted from his head to my pen. Perhaps—I certainly don't rule this out—I have lost *my* mind: perhaps no matter what my father taps I see only "C"s, and the occasional "P." Or perhaps our system works perfectly, our philosopher's mind works perfectly, his theory of knowledge reaches the page just as he intends it, and I simply do not have the wherewithal to understand it. That, too, cannot be ruled out.

A letter is now coming my way. The old men grimace and suck, twitch and tap, blink and blow. My son, here to watch, looks on with pity and terror, still not sure how all this relates to him. He hates being in this room. You should see how eagerly at the end of the day he kisses his ancestors and races out ahead of me into the hall.

## TWO HATS

The son of the late philosopher-mystic Perelmann, who was writing a biography of his father, used to say at our weekly brown-bag colloquiums that he wore two hats: that of Perelmann's son and that of his biographer. We assumed that this was just a figure of speech until a graduate student who happened to be renting an apartment across the street from him told us that he really wore two *physical hats*: the son-of-Perelmann hat was a Boston Red Sox cap, and the

biographer-of-Perelmann hat was a brown fedora. Some evenings he wore the Red Sox cap, some evenings he wore the brown fedora, and some evenings he went back and forth, more or less rapidly, between the cap and the fedora.

Word circulated, and before long the chair of the department knocked on Perelmann's son's office door. The chair urged him to take some time off, please, for his own sake.

"Bill," Perelmann's son said, with a knowing smile. "Is this about the hats?"

The chair admitted that he was concerned.

"Bill," Perelmann's son said again, touching the chair's wrist. "Don't worry about me. I'm not going crazy, at least not yet! The hats serve a purely functional purpose."

It looked silly, he knew, but the hats helped him keep separate his two conflicting roles—first as a son still grieving for his father, second as a scholar trying to understand, to historicize, and, yes, to critique, as dispassionately as possible, his father's ideas. Before hitting upon the two-hat system, he'd lived in a state of perpetual self-reproach: when he thought of Perelmann in the way that a son thinks of his father, the scholar in him condemned his lack of objectivity, and when he thought of Perelmann in the way that a scholar thinks of his subject the son in him condemned his lack of loyalty.

The hats put an end to all that.

When he pulled on the old Red Sox cap, its snug fit and familiar smell had a Proustian effect. He was returned to the grandstands of Fenway Park, beside his father. He was suffused with compassion and pity, with respect, love, and acceptance—for his father's flaws no less than for his virtues. He wanted to annihilate his father's academic detractors and slaughter those who would attempt to understand him as a product of his milieu. Such was the effect of the Red Sox cap. But under the weight of the brown fedora, beneath its sober brim, he could put aside his childish devotion and scrutinize his father's thought with the skepticism required of an intellectual historian. He investigated the genealogy of his father's ideas, examined their internal consistency, considered their presuppositions and limitations.

"Bill, I admit it's a strange system!" Perelmann's son said, laughing. "That what happens *in* our heads should be

so affected by what happens *on top of* our heads. But, for me, this does seem to be the case.” He shrugged. “It helps me proceed. I do not question it.”

The department chair went away intensely impressed, even moved. Word went around that Perelmann’s son was not crazy but brilliant.

At our next brown-bag colloquium, Perelmann’s son claimed to wear “four hats.” He was Perelmann’s son, Perelmann’s biographer, Perelmann’s philosophical interlocutor, and Perelmann’s estate executor.

The following morning, the graduate student reported that two new hats, a black bowler and a purple yarmulke, had entered the rotation. From what he’d seen, he hypothesized that the bowler was the executor hat and the yarmulke was the interlocutor hat. Perelmann’s son had spent most of the early evening going calmly back and forth between the Red Sox cap and the bowler. At around eight o’clock, the yarmulke had gone on and stayed on until just after nine. From then until midnight, he’d frantically switched among the yarmulke, the Red Sox cap, and the brown fedora. He had ended the night with forty-five relatively relaxed minutes in the black bowler.

“I’m fine, Bill!” Perelmann’s son said, touching the chair’s wrist. “How can I summon memories of my father one minute and deal with his taxes the next? Impossible, unless I *physically put on the bowler hat*. One minute I’m recalling

the sensation of being up on his shoulders, the next I’m attacking his peculiar interpretation of Kant? *The purple yarmulke*. Who taught him this idiosyncratic Kant, and when? *Brown fedora*.”

By the next colloquium, Perelmann’s son wore sixteen hats. He was Perelmann’s son, Perelmann’s biographer, Perelmann’s philosophical interlocutor, Perelmann’s estate executor, Perelmann’s publicist, Perelmann’s usurper, Perelmann’s housekeeper, Perelmann’s zealot, Perelmann’s annihilator, Perelmann’s designated philosophical heir, Perelmann’s defector, Perelmann’s librarian, Perelmann’s gene carrier, Perelmann’s foot soldier, Perelmann’s betrayer, and Perelmann’s doppelgänger. Twelve new hats joined the repertoire, including a beret, a bandanna, a small straw hat, and a sombrero.

Naturally, we were a little alarmed. Perelmann’s son’s evenings, the graduate student reported, were now mere blurs of hat transitions. Nothing stayed on his head for long. But reality, we assumed, would sooner or later impose a limit on his mania. There are only so many kinds of hats, just as there are only so many relations that can possibly obtain between a father and a son. In due course Perelmann’s son would run out of either hats or relations, we thought—probably hats—and thereafter he would return to reason.

But soon there were relations we had never considered, hats we’d never heard of. He was Perelmann’s old-Jewish-joke

repository, Perelmann’s voice impersonator, Perelmann’s sweater wearer, the last living practitioner of Perelmann’s skiing technique, Perelmann’s surpasser, Perelmann’s victim. He wore an eighteenth-century tricorne, a deerstalker, a round Hasidic kolpik, an Afghan pakol with a peacock feather tucked into its folds.

By the end of the fall semester we knew something had to be done. The explosion of hats and relations had not abated. Left alone, we realized, Perelmann’s son would partition his relationship with his father *ad infinitum*, and for each infinitesimal slice of relationship he would purchase a hat. Ultimately, he would turn his relationship with his father—by nature, one simple thing—into something infinitely complex, and his hat collection would, correspondingly, grow without bound, and he would wind up destroying himself. His analytical tendency, along with the huge hat collection that resulted from it, would obliterate him.

So, one morning, in an attempt to save Perelmann’s son from himself, a group of graduate students and junior faculty members slipped, with the department chair’s blessing, into his apartment. (He was at a Perelmann conference.) We gathered all the hats and put them in garbage bags—a hundred and twenty-eight hats in twelve garbage bags—and got them out of there.

But in our hearts we must have known that we were treating the symptom, not the cause. Yesterday, according to our informant, Perelmann’s son spent all day and all night in a ten-gallon hat of thus far unknown paternal associations.

## THE MADMAN’S TIME MACHINE

On the coldest night of the year, a madman was taken to Boston Medical Center with third-degree frostbite. The police had found him under an overpass, naked in a cardboard box. Scrawled on the box in black Magic Marker were the words “TIME MACHINE.”

Oddly, the frostbitten madman was jubilant.

Until recently, he told the psychiatrist assigned to him, he had been the most intelligent person in history, smarter even than Einstein (“if only by a little bit”) and Newton (“if only by a





little bit”). But his historic intelligence had been a curse.

“Being able to perceive the true nature of everything instantly is actually awful,” he told the psychiatrist. He had grown bored and lonely. The moment that he initiated a thought, he reached its logical terminus. “At some point,” he said, “there is just nothing left to think. Meanwhile, everyone else is back there at the first principles, the assumptions, the postulates.”

He had investigated the great problems of cosmology but solved them immediately. In May, he ended metaphysics. He turned to the nature of time, which he hoped would divert his mind for at least a few weeks, but it revealed itself to him in an afternoon. Once again he was bored and lonely. So he built the time machine.

“That right there?” the psychiatrist asked, gesturing at the cardboard box, which the madman had refused to relinquish.

“That,” the madman said with a strange smile, “is merely a cardboard box.”

The real time machine, he said, was obviously much more complicated, and was obviously made entirely, or almost entirely, out of metal. For a while it had relieved his boredom. He visited the recent past, then the near future, then the distant past, and then the remote future. He sought out the company of his fellow-geniuses. He discussed gravity with Galileo and buoyancy with Archimedes. He brought Fermat to the near future and ate future bagels, which are “much puffier and much more moist,” according to the madman, than the bagels of today. He met one of the most important thinkers of the remote future, a mammoth reptilian creature with an unpronounceable name, and took him back in time to meet Louis XIV, the so-called Sun King. This meeting, the madman said, was “incredibly awkward.”

Soon the madman had talked to everyone worth talking to, seen everything worth seeing, thought about everything worth thinking about, and yet again was left bored and lonely. Even the company of geniuses wasn’t enough; boredom would always be with him, he realized, as long as he had this huge, historic intelligence. Suicide was the only way out. He decided to commit suicide by para-



*“And this little piggy said, ‘Putting aside the fact that we are domesticated pigs, and can subsist quite well on a diet of corn and grains, there is the very real and disturbing possibility that the roast beef you’re eating was our dear friend Margie.’”*

dox. He would go back in time and kill his own grandfather—a logical impossibility, as we all know, he said, since killing his grandfather would mean that he himself wouldn’t be born, which would mean that he couldn’t go back in time to kill his grandfather. So this might be interesting, he said. Plus he would get to murder the man who had handed down to him this huge, horrible, historic intelligence.

The madman set his time machine for 1932 Berlin, where his grandfather was a promising Expressionist painter. He materialized in his grandfather’s studio carrying a gun. “*Nein!*” his grandfather yelled, raising his paintbrush, the madman told the psychiatrist. “*Nein!*” He aimed his pistol. His grandmother ran in. “*Nein!*” she said, according to the madman. “*Nein! Nein!*” He fired into his grandfather’s chest, and the promising Expressionist painter fell over dead.

But the madman didn’t disappear. Nor, he said, did the universe implode. Was there no paradox after all?

As his sobbing grandmother ran over to his dead grandfather, the madman noticed the slight swell of her belly. Ah!

he realized, as he recalled to the psychiatrist. She was already pregnant!

That instant, the madman vanished from the studio and materialized naked under an overpass in a cardboard box labelled “TIME MACHINE.” The real time machine was gone. For a moment he was confused. Then everything became terrifically clear. His father had still been born, but now fatherlessly, and his life had gone, instead of well, poorly. Instead of becoming a mathematician, he’d become an underemployed roofer. His son, the madman, had no longer grown up in an intellectual milieu. Instead of becoming brilliant beyond bounds, the madman said with evident relief, he had become stupid, and even a little bit insane. And obviously in this alternate universe he was totally and utterly incapable of building an actual functioning time machine.

“Look at it now!” the madman cried joyfully. “A cardboard box!” ♦

**NEWYORKER.COM**

Adam Ehrlich Sachs on dysfunction between fathers and sons.

# THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

## AIR HEAD

*How aviation made the modern mind.*

BY NATHAN HELLER

I fly an average of twice a month these days, usually for work, and although I spent much of my life afraid of airplanes, I now chase them with an addict's need. If it has been a while since I have been aloft, I'm restless, peevish, mindless, tired—useless as a human being. The start of a flight heralds a game afoot. The rush is skittish and improbable. A freighted mass of metal rattling down the runway gains a sudden burst of speed and, in a small, miraculous gasp, loses its weight, rises, and soars, enacting careful turns and radio coordinations that accrue toward effortlessness. On the ground, on landing, it's again a metal hulk; the metamorphosis reverses itself. A part of me is sure I'll die at every takeoff, yet I need to feel that panic and lift or I'm hopeless. Flight is the best metaphor for writing that I know.

The sublimity of the act is heightened by the earthly mess around it. On arriving at the airport, you push your way through snarled security lines—the shoes, the belt, the laptop, the canopic bag of fluids—and purchase a day-old ciabatta sandwich. You sit and read, glancing at a suspended screen that seems to play only disaster news and weather reports from the Midwest. You hear your boarding announcement: more queues and lost elderly people with enormous bags. The airplane seems to hail from the same era as your old dishwasher, which conked out last year. The guy beside you has a wide stance and an overmedicated gaze that suggests he will drool during his sleep. It has been three hours since you left home, and you are still waiting.

Why do we board planes? Flying relies on an old, delay-mired technology, scarcely updated since the advent of the jumbo jet, and the sorts of people who can pay for tickets usually have better op-

tions for getting what they need. Once, if you had to make a presentation to your Tokyo office, you would fly there. These days, you can tap a few buttons on your phone or your computer and start beaming your PowerPoint deck onto a remote screen. If you'd like a bespoke *lopapeysa*, you don't need to go to Iceland; you can order it online. The global promises of air travel—the wrinkles in time that allow the jet-setter to have breakfast in Boston and a lunch meeting in L.A., or to spend Friday seeing what's new in Phnom Penh and still be at work on Monday—are today realized with much less trauma using screens. Sure, you still buy tickets back to Minnesota for your parents' Christmas dinner, or to Tulum for a beach week. As a standard of global connection and fast access, though, air travel is now largely obsolete.

The forecast for the industry, accordingly, is bleak. "What is changing is that there is no promise of change, only a sort of numb acceptance of the beleaguered experience of flight," Christopher Schaberg writes in "The End of Airports" (Bloomsbury), a wandering but well-fuelled study of air travel's fading profile in our digitally transported age. "This acceptance is often signaled and mediated by where we look in airports: down into our palms, where faster and quieter machines connect us to one another." Schaberg teaches literature, at Loyola University, in New Orleans, but he used to work at the airport in Bozeman, Montana, and his interest in the culture of flight arises from years spent on the tarmac and at the check-in desk.

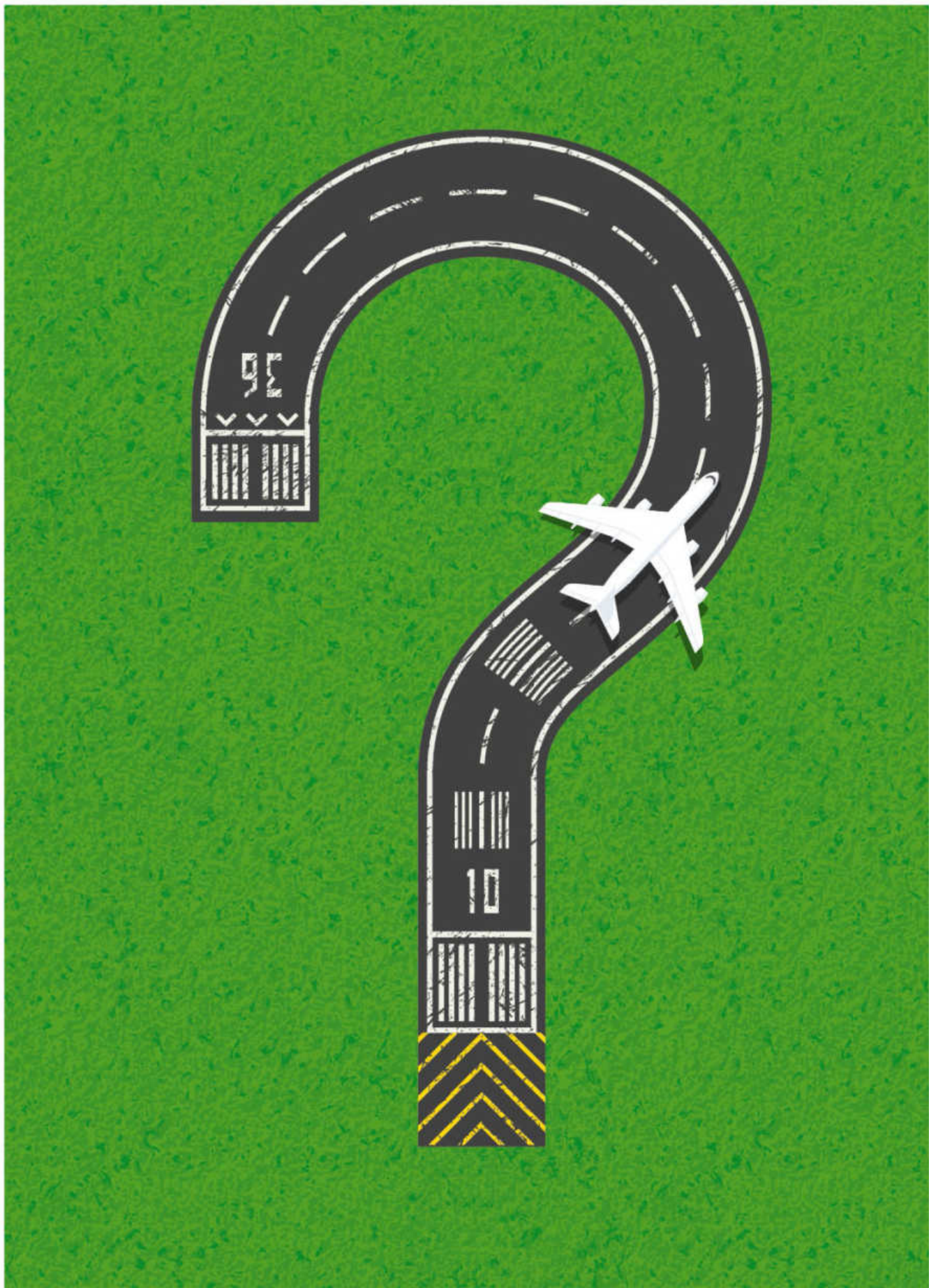
Schaberg's first book, "The Textual Life of Airports" (2011), explained how the airport mythologized and subverted air travel for passengers. That work

emerged from his dissertation, and it followed a style of feverish pop-cultural close reading strangely valued in some academic quarters. It sometimes seemed a touch insane. (Puzzling over a Leo Cul-lum cartoon from this magazine—a guy dragging himself through the desert on all fours hears a boarding call and frets, "I'll never make it"—Schaberg complained that the drawing "goes against the environmental writer Gary Snyder's assertion that crawling can help people get to know their bioregions.") "The End of Airports" is, pleasantly, less ramrod and more personal. Schaberg recalls the moment when air travel marked the apogee of cosmopolitan romance; he believes that the future favors virtual experience. He tells us, "In a world where social networking can facilitate revolutions, and where connections happen as easily on-line as off, it seems inevitable that moving hundreds of bodies around in large vessels will go out of fashion."

Surprisingly, the numbers do not bear this out. In 1960, a hundred million people flew. In 2006, two billion did. Today, after the advent of the mobile Web and the intensification of terror-inspired travel constraints, 3.5 billion people fly every year. Schaberg's inquiry is vexed, partly because he can't decide whether the problem with flight is that it's unfashionable or that it's technologically obsolete. But the real contest lies elsewhere. The battle between jet planes and smartphones isn't about speed or glamour. It's about ways of knowing.

Several weeks ago, I found myself at a lunch seminar of neuroscientists in Central Jutland, halfway up the Danish coast. The day's lecture was short, with slides; the speaker, a neuropsychologist





*A new book argues that, in a networked world, “moving hundreds of bodies around in large vessels will go out of fashion.”*



named Chris Frith, argued that a crucial feature of consciousness was regret. I had flown to Denmark a few days earlier, for other escapades. The reason I had been invited to the seminar was that I'd met a postdoc researcher one night at an underground circus held at an artists' commune. The reason I was at the circus was that a magician with a black coat and a pencil mustache had urged me to go; I'd been introduced to him two hours earlier, by a Danish artist who had once been an acolyte of Allen Ginsberg, in New York. I had been pointed toward the artist after asking about a lobby mural while checking out of my hotel that morning. Whatever I felt for those days' adventures, it was not regret.

Flight, from the start, was thought to prime encounters of this kind. "Most of our existing methods of transport, together with the physical and mental emotions that accompany them, will be profoundly changed," Rudyard Kipling told the Royal Geographical Society, in 1914. "The time is near when men will receive their normal impressions of a new country suddenly and in plan, not slowly and in perspective; when the most extreme distances will be brought within the compass of one week's—one hundred and sixty-eight hours'—travel; when the word 'inaccessible' as applied to any given spot on the surface of the globe will cease to have any meaning." Kipling's tone was magisterial, but, as someone who had made a career out of describing journeys to far-seeming regions, he was marking the terms of his own artistic eclipse.

That was in February. By August, 1914, the First World War was under way, and Kipling's vision was thrust into battle. Airplanes, a novelty technology that had first been series-manufactured a few years earlier, were dispatched for reconnaissance. In the spring of 1915, the French aircraft company Morane-Saulnier found that if you mounted a machine gun up front and put bullet deflectors behind the propeller blades you could shoot from the cockpit without damaging your own plane. By the Armistice, in 1918, France, Britain, Germany, and the United States had together produced nearly two hundred thousand aircraft and trained enough pilots to fly them. Commercial avia-

tion was the afterglow of a campaign for terror in the skies.

It was the Europeans, not the Americans, who first realized that the new technology could be marketed not simply as a way to transfer cargo and ordnance but as a privileged experience. "Service on the European airlines was courteous and efficient," Alastair Gordon explains in his excellent cultural history of the industry, *"The Naked Airport"* (2004). The passages were expensive (plane tickets in the twenties cost up to fifty per cent more than first-class fares on trains and ocean liners), yet the trips could not be called luxurious. Cabins were as temperate as a meat freezer, and skull-numbingly loud. The first commercial "flight" from New York to Los Angeles, in 1929, was a forty-eight-hour purgatory of intermingled train and air time, the better to avoid flying at night, which early travellers were reluctant to do. Gordon quotes one passenger's description of the mood in boarding areas: "Marie Antoinette on her way to the guillotine was a bluebird for happiness in comparison."

What held the industry together was the new rhythm of contact it allowed. Cecelia Brady, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *"The Last Tycoon,"* describes "that sharp rip between coast and coast" by talking about a feeling of "lingering—and not quite on purpose." The paradox of lingering across the rip characterizes flight, and, particularly in Europe, it brought progressive changes. "Aviation drew a new kind of political map," Gordon writes. "European borders became more fluid." Territories that, for centuries, had been contiguous, local, and tribal were now a giant game of hopscotch. The Continent became a network of metropolitan capitals.

Proust had anticipated the effects of the change a few years earlier. The narrator of *"In Search of Lost Time,"* while riding on horseback through the woods, sees, for the first time, a pilot soaring overhead, and immediately bursts into tears: "I felt that there lay open before him—before me, had not habit made me a prisoner—all the routes in space, in life itself; he flew on, let himself glide for a few moments over the sea, then quickly making up his mind, seeming to yield to some attraction that was the reverse of gravity, as though returning

to his native element." Proust's genius was to recognize that the shock of flight wasn't technological but intellectual; he captures the true heartbreak of mortality, not the knowledge that the world continues on without us but a realization that the human mind—its quests and frontiers—flies on, too. The airborne class and those who brushed against it came to represent what we might call "encounter thought": a way of processing the world which grew from easy geographic leaps and happenstantial connections.

This fresh kind of encounter indulged the bonds underlying the sociologist Mark S. Granovetter's influential claim, from 1973, that "weak ties"—people you sort of know—extend farther and more consequentially than strong-tie networks, such as those made up of your family and friends. In the Kipling era, adventurers were largely leathery rusticators and frontierspeople. In the world of air travel, they could be cosmopolitans and professionals: business executives, fur-clad film types, journalists, dealmaking lawyers, wealthy hobbyists—people we might now think of as standard-bearers of the information economy. By the thirties, developing airports had become a cause for people who believed that urbanism, and the social encounters it nurtured, defined the vectors of the future.

One of those people was Fiorello LaGuardia, who became the mayor of New York in 1934. At the time, Newark's airport was the most advanced in the area: it had pioneered air-traffic control by radio, allowing densely coordinated takeoffs and landings, and become the unofficial hub for New York City. This drove LaGuardia crazy. ("Newark," he snapped, "is not New York.") Once, after landing in New Jersey on a New York ticket, Gordon tells us, he refused to deplane until the crew flew the hop to New York's own, extremely shabby airfield, on the far edge of Brooklyn—a long and traffic-choked drive from Manhattan. LaGuardia followed up on the episode by wrangling twenty-seven million dollars from the federal government and using most of it to dump trash and dirt onto the marshlands at Flushing Bay, a site he'd chosen for a new and grander field. The press called the venture "LaGuardia's folly," and the attribution



stuck even as popular sentiment about it warmed—or didn't. Reviewing the airport in this magazine, in 1939, Lewis Mumford described it as "a series of bungles." He wrote, "People who can spoil their opportunities to enjoy the meeting of land, water, and sky obviously don't deserve anything better than [this] bombproof shelter." Present-day LaGuardia travellers can decide whether his judgment stands.

By the time Mayor LaGuardia left office, in 1946, a second field, then called Idlewild, was being built on Jamaica Bay, to accommodate the overflow from his eponymous airport. The new structure was bigger, as it needed to be able to dock nearly a hundred planes: mainstream air travel, like so much in post-war America, would arrive with great ambition, and in bulk.

“Once I get you up there, where the air is rarefied”; “From Russia with love, I fly to you.” By the early sixties, jet travel was carrying a poetic dream as surely as the railroad had a century earlier—and just a little more, because a jet, exceeding Kipling’s vision, could make any global journey in the span of a day. The new planes were largely impervious to weather. They could cross the U.S. in a morning and the Atlantic between dinner and the next day’s breakfast. They offered luxury of a quality that freezing, fear-addled fliers in the twenties scarcely imagined.

“Jet” became in the sixties what “cyber” or “Web” was to a later decade: a prefix that could furnish anything with a cool gleam of futurism. George Jetson appeared in 1962. “Jet lag,” an affliction of the well travelled, first showed up in print in 1965; “jet-setting” grew synonymous with chic. John F. Kennedy was the first President to make a jet the symbol of Air Force One, and it’s debatable which of them, the man or the plane, got the greater image boost from the upgrade. Gordon describes the jet world’s glamour on his first visit to Eero Saarinen’s Idlewild (recently renamed Kennedy) complex, in 1964, when he was twelve. “Pilots stepped through pools of milky light,” he writes. “Beautiful stewardesses trailed behind them wearing trim red outfits and perfectly straight stocking seams. The ambient lighting, the flirtatious smiles, the

lipstick-red carpet and uniforms, the cushioned benches and steel railings curving around the mezzanine—all conspired on the senses.”

This was the “golden age” for which Schaberg is so nostalgic. Big airports were accessible, luxurious, masculine, feminine, businesslike, unbusinesslike—most things to most people. The sixties brought America’s strongest contributions to air travel since the Wright brothers, in part because a widely travelled public was thought to wield cultural power. (The congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce said, “American postwar aviation policy is simple: we want to fly *everywhere*.”) If the cultural legacy of the Eisenhower years had been mostly domestic, articulated through the interstate highway system, the Kennedy and Johnson years set aloft a war of soft imperialism almost overshadowing the harder kind.

And because jet travel was a technology that connected the domestic-luxury sphere with the world of professional adventure, a rising generation of women used it to sidestep into new roles. Gloria Steinem calls her recent memoir “My Life on the Road,” but she never learned to drive; she got around largely on planes. Joan Didion, a student of Hemingway and Fitzgerald and a steel-edged bricoleur of upper-middle-class fantasy, wrote obsessively of flights

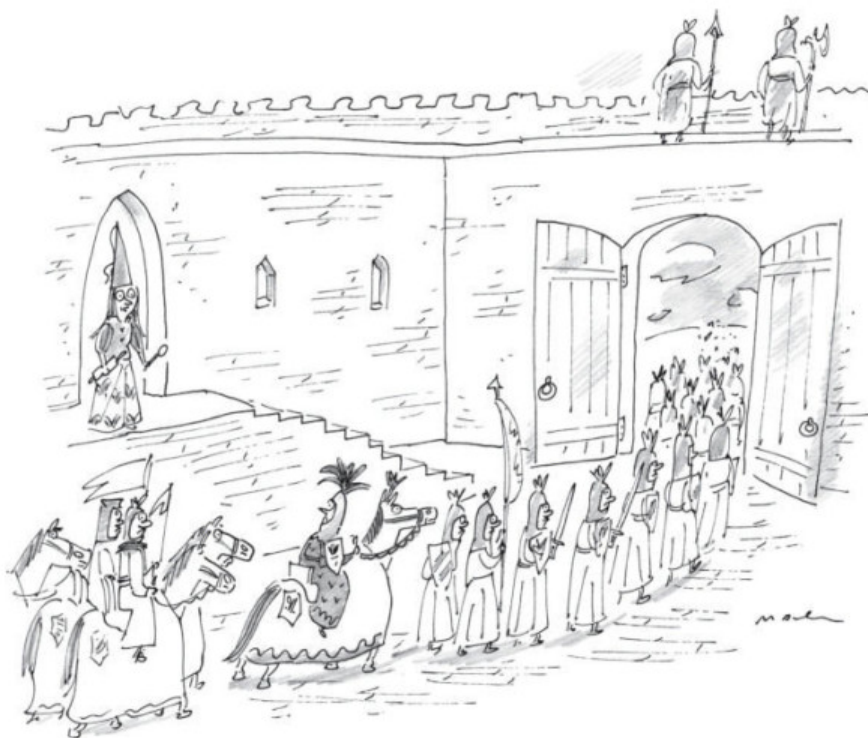
and hotels. Today, the New Journalism is often misremembered as a formal innovation, a convergence of novelistic reporting and voice-driven subjectivity. But these narrative techniques had been in use for decades, in magazines such as this one; what made the New Journalism new was its vigor as a literary life-style movement, based largely on the idea that professional process—the getting there, the rips between the coasts—was part of the essential story, too. When Kennedy first appears in Norman Mailer’s “Superman Comes to the Supermarket” (1960), the Senator is arriving from the airport, and the writer is getting his bearings after being jolted from New York to Los Angeles. Mailer goes on to describe the candidate’s female supporters as the type who “worked for a year as an airline hostess before marrying well.” The kind of thought that came with flight shaped a new standard of sophistication and, within a certain generation, new problems to be parsed and performed:

I decided to stop here because I almost had an accident just as I was jotting down this last sentence, when, on leaving the airport, I was driving home after the trip to Tokyo.

That is Jacques Derrida, in the last sentence of a 1984 lecture on “Ulysses”—specifically, exploring the way



*“I’m looking to hire someone who can be acquiescent without making me uncomfortably aware of it.”*



*"If I really didn't need nutmeg, do you think I'd  
ask you to go out and get it?"*

its author uses the word "yes" to mark an elaborate negotiation between self-identity and a path of interaction through the world. Joyce, writing in Paris, had hounded his aunt for newspaper clippings from Dublin. It was an exceptional thing to do. By the time the book was canonic, though, such leaps of identity across space and memory were the new habits of mind.

Writers and travellers alike do their best work when they don't know what they're looking for; disorientation requires problem-solving, and a new landscape holds secrets still. These days, I never totally unpack my suitcase. I buy only folding toothbrushes. I leave, often, on short notice—my record is three and a half hours before takeoff, for a transatlantic trip—and I like my mind best when it's on the move. To land somewhere unfamiliar is to force yourself into alertness, to redraw whatever maps you have, to set the stage for creativity more than mere pattern-matching productivity. I sometimes think I love the gentle, kneeling left turn planes make after rising from

the Kennedy runway more than I love New York itself.

Like many frequent fliers, though, I claim to find advantage in basic routine. I know to book a window seat on red-eyes and an aisle in the daytime. I can explain why a 7 A.M. departure from New York is the best flight to California, what snack is safest in Delta's lounge, and which seat is usually the first out. (It's not in first class.) I can mimic the progression of cabin pings and flap extensions that announce the landing sequence in a Boeing, or the hydraulic bark of an Airbus. These skills have narrow applications, but, then, so does C.P.R. Their goal is to avert the interminable lines and vanished hours that seem, at times, maybe a little worse than death.

Walter Kirn caricatured these anxieties in his 2001 novel, "Up in the Air." "I call it Airworld; the scene, the place, the style," his jet-setting narrator, Ryan Bingham, says. "Airworld is a nation within a nation, with its own language, architecture, mood, and even its own currency—the token economy of airline bonus miles that I've

come to value more than dollars." Fifty years ago, Bingham would have scanned as a dynamic hero. By the time the novel appeared, he was a schlubby man-child, a guy who flies because he cannot deal with life on the ground.

What happened? One theory holds that the new air travel, anodyne and hollow, is part of a more general mainstreaming of rare experience. Flying used to be special, but now it's just a thing we do, and the market has responded accordingly. As Schaberg puts it, "Distinct aspects of airports (including high demand for entertainment, feelings of 'dead time,' anxieties about contingencies) have anticipated and helped to pave the way for a host of newer experiences that are more about on-demand mediation and information (and capital) flows—and less about human bodies actually *going places*." We're unamazed by flight, so we numb ourselves to its trials by blending it into the noise of everyday commerce. The privileges of Airworld recede further. (Witness the Buy Your Own Damn Sandwich phenomenon in coach.) Several airlines have responded by trying to make the high end of the market extra-special. Flying in first class on Emirates, you have access to an onboard shower—just in case the idea of being naked on a wet surface during turbulence sounds fun.

This would seem to be part of a bigger shift in aviation commerce. Airports used to run off landing and lease fees. Now they rely equally on retail to keep the lights on. Most of us can tell. An airport is among the most challenging structures to design—the architectural equivalent of a fugue—partly because movement in it is both various and constrained. International arrivals cannot mix with domestic until they've gone through immigration. Baggage handling should be neither seen nor heard, though it's the vastest operation of all. The global range of airports chiefly displays different theories about how to sell.

In the nineties, this meant a turn toward single-terminal airports: Denver, Hong Kong, London's Stansted. Funnelling everyone through one giant terminal focussed retail. It encouraged



flagship restaurants, and it worked well with the growing hub system, which required transfers. More recently, the emphasis has been on hybridized volume and variety. Airports are now malls. Increasingly (and desperately), they're casinos. Derek Moore, the director of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and an architect who has designed airports for twenty-five years, says that the most ambitious sites in progress, such as Dubai, are anticipating passenger flows exceeding a hundred million a year—more than any currently operational airport sees. None of these new mega-airports are American. "The U.S. carriers are not leaders in service standards. They're not even followers," Moore, many of whose recent projects have been in India, says. Airports, designed for the complex interaction of specific processes, are inherently prone to obsolescence. Pilots for some U.S. carriers have complained of wild drops in salary and disappearing pensions. Asking what happened to the golden age of air travel, then, is to ask the wrong question: India, the United Arab Emirates, and China have great eras coming, bigger and more majestic than T.W.A. in 1964. We should ask what happened to *our* golden age.

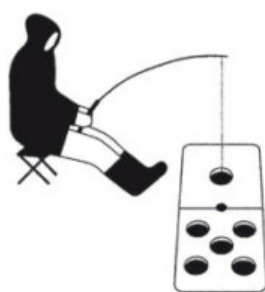
The turn is more than infrastructural. At the peak of their glory, American airports were temples for encounter thought. Since September, 2001, they have become something else—theatres where mediated information sources build a story about menace and protection, commerce and control. The end of our golden age of air travel partly heralds the natural life span of a mechanical technology—and an environmentally unsound one, too. But, as Schaberg points out, it also marks a shift in how we navigate a globalized world.

When physical travel cedes to digital exploration, a certain style of discovery falls away. You can explore on your phone; you can explore on the Web. You can stumble on fascinating things. The Internet is a vast, interactive museum engineered by curators and augmented by other visitors' preferences. Look at this! it says. Click here! Come down this passageway! It lacks

physical constraints, but also circumstantial contingencies; all points of passage through it have to be, in some sense, primed. You cannot casually ask about the background image of a Web page and be directed to a secret circus a short walk from where you stand. The stories you uncover through your smartphone are stories, basically, asking to be found.

Getting outside the museum is hard. There is a moment in "The Big Short," the new film based on Michael Lewis's reporting on the mortgage crisis, in which Steve Carell's character, a querulous hedge-fund manager, wants to figure out whether to bet against the market. It is 2007. The wisest analysts in New York and Washington are sanguine. He gets on a plane, flies to Florida, and meets some people on whose mortgages the market rides. He finds abandoned houses, loans for the unemployed, and a pole dancer who owns many homes. Encounter thinking, our response to the exceptional, saves us from the errors of consensus and the expectations of smooth process that, like myths of consolation, leave us ill-equipped to deal with changes when they come.

The worst air logistics I've ever encountered were en route to a reporting assignment in Monaco—a destination with a gloss of antiquated glamour foreign to me, and a project that suggested



I'd been dropped into another traveler's life. I was flying from New York to Nice, through London. It was mid-May, and, at some point during my trip over the Atlantic, the French went on strike. My transfer flight was cancelled. I got rebooked on a different airline, transferring through Madrid that afternoon. In Spain, the connection was cancelled, too. I was told that I could fly to Lisbon, for a new transfer; I'd just have to get my bag, which, for some

Mediterranean reason, required sneaking back through a no-entry security door. By that point, I had been in Airworld for more than fifteen hours. I hadn't slept since the previous morning. My laptop was out of power, and so I sat on the floor of the empty, fluorescent-lit baggage-claim area, tethered to an outlet in the wall, awaiting a suitcase that might never appear and a new flight leading farther in the wrong direction. I did not feel lucky.

We landed in Lisbon at sunset. The light was Cognac-colored, and there was a soft wind off the water. On the tarmac, a flight attendant held a passenger's infant, and the breeze stirred her skirt and the swaddling of the baby in her arms: Madonna and child. To my surprise, the flight to Nice took off, not long after midnight, with me on it. The airplane was a freezing Fokker so small that I was told to change my seat because the engines often made it shake. At 2 A.M., some twenty-six hours after I'd left New York, we touched down at the Nice airport, which seemed deserted. Outside, among the palms, I met a driver with a black Mercedes; French taxis were striking, he said. We set off.

Because it was so late, the tunnels through the coastal cliffs were closed, and so we took the old route—up and over, winding past small hillside homes and down the Route de Menton, in La Turbie. "Look at *that*," the driver said. The road had forked again. To our right, the hills fell away, revealing a full moon. The Mediterranean gaped beneath it, wide and textured like the skin of an old person's cheek. I rolled the window down, certain that I was watching something people were not supposed to see: the world undressing itself, changing color, wiping off its makeup with a moonlight-hued layer of cream. A breeze came up, jasmine and silk trees, and we followed it down toward the water. Every switchback offered a new view. I arrived at my destination and reported my piece, but, when I think of that week, what's sharpest in my memory is the slow sunset descent to Portugal, the woman cradling a baby whom she did not know, the brightness of the moon on the sea long past midnight. Anyway, it was better than the fast flight home. ♦

# DESIGN FOR LIVING

*What's great about Goethe?*

BY ADAM KIRSCH



In the English-speaking world, we are used to thinking of our greatest writer as an enigma, or a blank. Though there's enough historical evidence to tell us when Shakespeare was born and when he died, and more than enough to prove that he wrote the plays ascribed to him, the record is thin. Indeed, the persistence of conspiracy theories attributing Shakespeare's work to the Earl of Oxford or other candidates is a symptom of how little we actually understand about his life. His religious beliefs, his love affairs, his relationships with other writers, his daily routine—these are permanent mysteries, and biographies of Shakespeare are always mostly speculation.

To get a sense of how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe dominates German literature, we would have to imagine a Shakespeare known to the last inch—a Shakespeare squared or cubed. Goethe's significance is only roughly indicated by the sheer scope of his collected works, which run to a hundred and forty-three volumes. Here is a writer who produced not only some of his language's greatest plays but hundreds of major poems of all kinds—enough to keep generations of composers supplied with texts for their songs. Now consider that he also wrote three of the most influential novels in European literature, and a series of classic memoirs documenting

his childhood and his travels, and essays on scientific subjects ranging from the theory of colors to the morphology of plants.

Then, there are several volumes of his recorded table talk, more than twenty thousand extant letters, and the reminiscences of the many visitors who met him throughout his sixty-year career as one of Europe's most famous men. Finally, Goethe accomplished all this while simultaneously working as a senior civil servant in the duchy of Weimar, where he was responsible for everything from mining operations to casting actors in the court theatre. If he hadn't lived from 1749 to 1832, safely into the modern era and the age of print, but had instead flourished when Shakespeare did, there would certainly be scholars today theorizing that the life and work of half a dozen men had been combined under Goethe's name. As it is, in the words of Nicholas Boyle, his leading English-language biographer, "More must be known, or at any rate there must be more to know, about Goethe than about almost any other human being."

Germans began debating the significance of the Goethe phenomenon while he was still in his twenties, and they have never stopped. His lifetime, spanning some of the most monumental disruptions in modern history, is referred to as a single whole, the *Goethezeit*, or Age of Goethe. Worshipped as the greatest genius in German history and as an exemplary poet and human being, he has also been criticized for his political conservatism and quietism, which in the twentieth century came to seem sinister legacies. Indeed, Goethe was hostile to both the French Revolution and the German nationalist movement that sprang up in reaction to it. More radical and Romantic spirits especially disdained the way this titan seemed content to be a servant to princes—and Grand Duke Karl August of Weimar, despite his title, was a fairly minor prince—in an age of revolution.

One famous anecdote concerns Goethe and Beethoven, who were together at a spa resort when they unexpectedly met a party of German royalty on the street. Goethe deferentially stood aside and removed his hat, while Beethoven kept his hat firmly on his head and plowed through the royal group,

*A new selection of Goethe's work reveals both his vast range and his unity of purpose.*



forcing them to make way—which they did, while offering the composer friendly greetings. Here was a contrast of temperaments, but also of generations. Goethe belonged to the courtly past, when artists were the clients of princes, while Beethoven represented the Romantic future, when princes would clamor to associate with artists. Historians dispute whether the incident actually took place, but if it didn't the story is arguably even more revealing; the event became famous because it symbolized the way people thought about Goethe and his values.

Goethe's fame notwithstanding, he is strangely neglected in the English-speaking world. English readers are notoriously indifferent to the poets of other cultures, and Goethe's poems, unfortunately, seldom come across vividly in translation. This is partly because Goethe so often cloaks his sophistication in deceptively simple language. "Heidenröslein," one of his earliest great poems, is written in the style of a folk song and almost entirely in words of one or two syllables: "*Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn*" ("A boy saw a little rose standing"). "The Essential Goethe" (Princeton), a rich new anthology, a thousand pages long, edited by Matthew Bell, which valiantly seeks to display every facet of Goethe's genius, gives the poem in a translation by John Frederick Nims:

Urchin blurts: "I'll pick you, though,  
Rosebud in the heather!"  
Rosebud: "Then I'll stick you so  
That there's no forgetting, no!  
I'll not stand it, ever!"

Nims reproduces the rhythm of the original precisely. But to do so he adds words that aren't in the original ("though") and resorts to distractingly winsome diction ("urchin," "I'll not"). The result is clumsy and charmless. The very simplicity of Goethe's language makes his poetry practically untranslatable.

English speakers are more hospitable to fiction in translation, and yet when was the last time you heard someone mention "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" or "Elective Affinities," Goethe's long fictions? These books have a good claim to have founded two of the major genres of the modern novel—respectively, the Bildungsroman and the novel

of adultery. Goethe's first novel, "The Sorrows of Young Werther," is better known, mainly because it represented such an enormous milestone in literary history; the first German international best-seller, it is said to have started a craze for suicide among young people emulating its hero. But in English it remains a book more famous than read.

This wasn't always the case. Victorian intellectuals revered Goethe as the venerable Sage of Weimar. Thomas Carlyle implored the reading public to "close thy Byron, open thy Goethe"—which was as much as to say, "Grow up!" Matthew Arnold saw Goethe as a kind of healer and liberator, calling him the "physician of the Iron Age," who "read each wound, each weakness" of the "suffering human race." For these writers, Goethe seemed to possess something the modern world lacked: wisdom, the ability to understand life and how it should be lived. It was this very quality that led to his fall from favor in the post-Victorian age. For the modernists, being spiritually sick was a condition of intellectual respectability, and T. S. Eliot wrote that "there is something artificial and even priggish about Goethe's healthiness." Reading Goethe today, even through the veil of translation, is most valuable as an encounter with a way of thinking and feeling that has grown foreign to us.

The key to Goethe is that the spiritual "healthiness" so disliked by Eliot was not that of a man with a perfect constitution but that of a recovered invalid. He knew the "weakness" that Arnold described all too well. Goethe's early life was a privileged one—he was the only surviving son of a prosperous bourgeois family in Frankfurt—and as a young man he teetered on the brink of waywardness. Though he studied law, at his father's insistence, and even practiced briefly, the occupation was never more than a cover for what really interested him, which was writing poetry and falling in love. It was one of these early infatuations that plunged Goethe into the despair that would become the subject of his first success, "The Sorrows of Young Werther."

This short novel tells the story of an unhappy love affair. Through letters written by Werther to a friend, we learn about

his hopeless love for Charlotte, an affectionate and virtuous young woman who is already engaged to a worthy man, Albert. After Charlotte and Albert get married, Werther feels that he has nothing to live for, and decides to commit suicide—a decision that he communicates in a gothic rhapsody of emotion: "You see, Charlotte, I do not shudder to take the cold and fatal cup, from which I shall drink the frenzy of death. Your hand gave it to me, and I do not tremble. All, all the wishes and the hopes of my life are fulfilled. Cold and stiff I knock at the brazen gates of death."

The book captured the sensibility of a generation, running, as Thomas Mann wrote, "like a fever and frenzy over the inhabited earth, acting like a spark in a powder magazine, setting free a dangerous amount of pent-up force." At least some of Goethe's readers took him to be endorsing and glamorizing Werther's suicide. One young woman, a Weimar courtier named Christel von Lassberg, drowned herself in the River Ilm with a copy of the novel in her pocket. Goethe must have felt much as one might imagine J. D. Salinger felt about Mark David Chapman's copy of "The Catcher in the Rye"—guilty, but also horrified at being so misread.

Yet, far from ennobling its hero, "Werther" is actually a warning against what Goethe sees as a consuming spiritual disease. What kills Werther is not disappointed love but toxic self-centeredness, subjectivity run wild. Whether he is enjoying the sublimity of a landscape or the company of Charlotte, Werther is always really only involved with himself, his own ideas and emotions. "The rich and ardent feeling which filled my heart with a love of Nature, overwhelmed me with a torrent of delight, and brought all paradise before me, has now become an insupportable torment—a demon which perpetually pursues me," he writes. The fatal complication of his illness is pride. Werther is not just miserable but proud of his misery, which he takes as proof that he is exceptionally sensitive—finer than the world that disappoints him. Having identified himself with the universe, he finds that when he is unhappy the universe becomes a prison.

So far, Werther strongly resembles Hamlet, who calls Denmark and the

whole world a prison, “for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” But Hamlet’s paralysis of will gives way, in Act V, to a commitment to the deed. “The readiness is all,” he declares, before finally taking revenge on Claudius. Werther, on the other hand, is never ready for action, because he has no momentous deed waiting to be performed. In this, he is a more modern figure than Hamlet, who, after all, was summoned by a ghost. Werther, like us, gets no help from the other world in directing his steps in this one.

Goethe knew his hero’s despair as well as any reader could. In fact, the book became scandalous for its resemblance to real people and events. Werther’s strained triangular relationship with Charlotte, whom he loves, and Albert, whom he respects as a friend, was taken directly from Goethe’s own entanglement with a woman named Charlotte Buff and her fiancé, Johann Kestner. Goethe spliced this story with that of a young man he barely knew, named Karl Jerusalem, who committed suicide—with a pistol borrowed from Kestner, just as Werther borrows Albert’s pistol for the same purpose. So closely did the events of the novel mirror those of real life that its publication, and then its enormous success, ruined Goethe’s relationship with Kestner, who wrote to complain about the way the author “prostituted the real persons whose features you borrow.”

The crucial difference between Goethe and his creation was that the poet found a way out of his labyrinth. In 1775, the year after “Werther” made him famous, he accepted an invitation from Grand Duke Karl August to move to Weimar, then a small independent duchy with a population of just a hundred thousand. Under Goethe’s direction and patronage, the tiny court became world famous for attracting some of the preëminent German minds of the age—notably, the poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller, Goethe’s friend and collaborator, and his early mentor Johann Gottfried Herder, the pioneering philosopher of language. But Goethe was not in Weimar simply as an ornament; to the dismay of the local aris-

tocracy, he was quickly raised to the highest level of government, becoming the Duke’s most trusted adviser. During his first ten years in Weimar, Goethe finished none of the major literary projects he had in hand—he was too busy with paperwork.

This might seem, as it did to many at the time, a waste of Goethe’s genius—like harnessing Pegasus to a cart. But Goethe, with the unerring instinct that seemed to guide him throughout his long life, had chosen the existence he needed—an existence as unlike Werther’s as possible. Instead of remaining focussed on his own passions and desires, he subdued his mind to the discipline of the objective, of work and responsibility. He turned toward objectivity in other ways as well, particularly in his study of science. Throughout his life, Goethe published scientific theories and “discoveries,” most of which were wrong and roundly ignored by the scientists of his day. But, while he failed to overthrow the Newtonian understanding of optics, Goethe found in science a necessary distraction from self.

At the same time, he developed a conception of nature that provided an alternative to the mathematical and spiritless mechanism that the Enlightenment seemed to offer. “The Essential Goethe” includes a generous sample of his scientific writing, which reveals how much of Goethe’s science was devoted to the idea of holism—the sense, more an intuition than a theory, that the universe is a living organism that develops and grows. “We experience the fullest sense of well-being when we are unaware of our parts and conscious only of the whole itself,” he writes in one essay. “Life in its wholeness is expressed as a force not attributable to any individual part of an organism.” This vitalism fit in well with the world view that Goethe had learned from Spinoza, who held that nature is God and God nature. “All finite beings exist within the infinite,” Goethe wrote. In this way, science performed something like the office of religion, turning Goethe into a kind of modern, rational pagan.

Ten years of office work, of literary projects left incomplete, finally took their

toll. In 1786, in a spirit of adventure characteristic more of a young poet than of a middle-aged civil servant, Goethe abruptly threw aside his work and left Weimar without telling friends and colleagues where he was going. Travelling under an assumed identity, he made his way to Italy, where he spent the next two years studying art and enjoying the country that he described, in one of his most famous poems, as “the land where lemon blossoms blow, / And through dark leaves the golden oranges glow.”

Goethe’s time in Italy marked a watershed in his life. He was thirty-seven. As a worshipper of the classical world and of Renaissance painting, Goethe found Italy—especially Rome, where he spent most of his time—to be a revelation and a rebirth. He wrote, “If I had not carried out the resolution I am now carrying out, I would simply have perished, so ripe had the desire become in my heart to see these sights with my own eyes.” Yet the book that resulted from this trip, the “Italian Journey,” has little to say about what was going on in Goethe’s heart. Instead, he focusses on the sights themselves—geological features of the country, garbage-disposal methods in the cities, a court trial, a theatrical performance. Much of Goethe’s Italian sojourn was spent trying, without success, to transform himself into a painter, and the book he wrote is a record more of things seen than of things felt.

Still, there is no missing the fact that this was a time of reawakening for the poet—spiritually and also sensually. As a young man, Goethe fell in love regularly; biographers define the periods of his life by the women who presided over them and the literary works they inspired. But these early romances tended to be platonic and idealized, much like Werther’s adoration of Charlotte. Partly, this was because Goethe took care to steer clear of anything that would commit him to marriage, which he assiduously avoided for as long as he could. An early relationship with Friederike Brion, a pastor’s daughter whom he wooed while he was a law student in Strasbourg, ended with the poet abruptly bailing on what Friederike, at least, had imagined to be an engagement. “Heidenröslein,” with its parable of seduction and abandonment—a boy plucks a rose, which pricks him with the thorn of regret—grew out





of Goethe's guilt over what he knew to be his own bad conduct. Later, at the court of Weimar, the poet engaged in a very intense, decade-long but apparently nonsexual relationship with a married woman, Charlotte von Stein.

Things were different in Rome, where Goethe had a liaison, frankly sexual this time, with a Roman widow whose name is not known. This newly liberated erotic spirit trailed him back to Weimar, where, soon after his return, he met and moved in with Christiane Vulpius, a woman so much his inferior in education and social status that marriage seemed out of the question. He did eventually marry her, but not until almost twenty years later, in 1806, by which time she had already borne him a son. Many in Weimar were shocked by their open cohabitation and by Goethe's choice of life partner—none more so than Charlotte von Stein, who turned with cold fury on her former spiritual mate. But the joy and liberation of these sexual experiences introduced a new strain into Goethe's poetry, as in the famous fifth "Roman Elegy," in which he describes counting the beat of hexameters on his lover's naked back. This, too, was a kind of education, the poem insists: "Also, am I not learning when at the shape of her bosom,/ Graceful lines, I can glance, guide a light hand down her hips?"

Liberated from his more onerous court duties, Goethe was free to take up projects that he had first begun to think about years, even decades, earlier: the gestation period for the verse drama "Faust" spanned more than thirty years, for the novel "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" almost twenty. Such lengthy gestation gives both books a loosely woven, episodic quality. But Goethe's persistence also testifies to the continuity of his interests and themes during his entire life. The meaning of education, the difficulty of embracing life and of living in the world, the danger and the redemptive possibilities of love: these questions, which animated "Werther" in the seventeen-seventies, are treated with greater maturity and complexity in these middle-period masterpieces.

The concept of *Bildung*—a word that means learning and education but also implies a cultivation of the self and of

maturity—was central to Goethe's thought, and he, in turn, made it central to German culture. For Thomas Mann, whose admiration of Goethe took the form of spiritual imitation, Goethe was above all an educator, but one who had first to learn, through experience, the wisdom he taught. Mann wrote that a "vocation towards educating others does not spring from inner harmony, but rather from inner uncertainties, disharmony, difficulty—from the difficulty of knowing one's own self."

This is the process Goethe dramatizes in "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," whose title can be taken in two senses. Literally speaking, Wilhelm, a bourgeois young man with artistic inclinations, apprentices himself to a touring theatre company, where he learns how to act and direct. Goethe writes with affection about the wide-open world of the actor, which is full of escapades and love affairs, bed tricks and

impersonations. Indeed, so many scandalous things happen in the novel—from adultery and illegitimacy to arson, incest, and suicide—that it often feels more like a gothic parody than like an earnest Bildungsroman.

Yet the more of the theatre world that Wilhelm sees, the less he likes it, and the more he realizes that he is unsuited to this way of life. What he really needs is education in a deeper sense—an apprenticeship to life and society, which will help him figure out who he really is and how he should live. In particular, Goethe—that son of the Frankfurt bourgeoisie, who was given an ennobling "von" by the prince he served—wants to show how a middle-class man like Wilhelm can find dignity and worth in a society whose ideals are still shaped by aristocrats. In this context, the idea of acting takes on a deeper meaning. "The nobleman tells us everything through the person he presents, but the burgher does not, and





*"Listen, girl. Run into town and go to the sheriff's office.  
Then make a right. Find the liquor store and get a bottle of 2011 Napa.  
Do not get the Chilean Malbec you got last time. Hurry!"*

should not," Goethe writes. "A nobleman can and must be someone who represents by his appearance, whereas the burgher simply is, and when he tries to put on an appearance, the effect is ludicrous or in bad taste."

In short, Goethe the artist and the courtier is arguing against the artistic life and the life of the court, at least where Wilhelm is concerned. Like Werther, Wilhelm can be considered a failed genius—someone who is enough of an artist to be sensitive and ambitious but not enough of one to actually become creatively productive. This makes him a significant modern type, whose descendants will populate a great deal of modern literature. (Emma Bovary is one example.) But, where Werther can see no way out of his predicament except suicide, Wilhelm is allowed to end the novel as a father and a husband, prepared to enter into the responsibilities of adulthood.

Still, good is never as glamorous as evil, and Wilhelm Meister comes across as a little dull and worthy compared with the hero of Goethe's most celebrated and canonical work, "Faust." While Wilhelm learns to accept his role in life,

Faust is defined by his refusal to be satisfied with anything life has to offer. As in the traditional folktale, and as in the Christopher Marlowe play, Goethe's Faust sells his soul to the Devil, Mephistopheles. But in Goethe's version what he asks in exchange is not magic powers or supernatural knowledge. It is, rather, experience—a life lived at fever pitch, "a frenzied round of agonizing joy,/Of loving hate, of stimulating discontent." The condition of his deal is that the Devil may take his soul whenever he grows too contented with life: "If I should bid the passing moment stay, or try/To hold its fleeting beauty, then you may/Cast me in chains and carry me away."

This is the central issue of Goethe's life and work: on what terms is life worth living? For Faust, as for Werther before him, ordinary existence is flavorless and intolerable; like an alcoholic, he demands ever-stronger draughts of emotional intoxication. Above all, he demands the intoxication of love, and he finds it with Gretchen, an innocent and virtuous young girl, whom he seduces and abandons. Not until the end of the play,

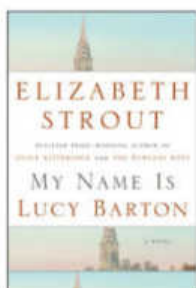
when Faust returns to find Gretchen in prison for infanticide, and on the edge of madness, does he realize how selfish his quest for experience has been. A heavenly voice announces that Gretchen will be saved—Goethe, no moralist when it comes to sex, can forgive her for being carried away by passion. But there is no salvation for Faust, whose crime is the one transgression that Goethe can never forgive—solipsism, the refusal to acknowledge the full reality of other people.

"Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister" can be considered wisdom books, in that they teach serious moral lessons. But they are the opposite of solemn; Goethe delights in his burlesque Mephistopheles, always mocking and jesting, as he does in the wild coincidences and improbabilities of Wilhelm's career. This combination of earnestness and jovial detachment is what characterizes the mature Goethe, and what makes him unique; no other writer gives us the same sense that he has both seen life and seen through it.

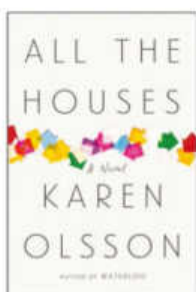
In the last decades of his life, Goethe brought this Olympian perspective to a series of late masterpieces, from the examination of adulterous passion in "Elective Affinities" to the surreal fantasia on history and myth that is "Faust, Part Two." (Neither of these works is included in "The Essential Goethe," nor is "Werther"—indeed, it's a measure of Goethe's abundance that you could put together a second volume of another thousand pages and fill it with works that are just as essential.) Old age did not put an end to Goethe's career as a lover: in 1821, when he was seventy-two, the widowed Goethe fell in love with a seventeen-year-old girl he met at a spa resort, and even proposed marriage. (She sensibly declined.) For Goethe, love and learning and writing formed a continuous cycle, which didn't cease until he was on his deathbed—and perhaps not even then. At the age of eighty-two, dying of a painful heart condition, Goethe's last words were "More light!" Probably his vision was dimming and he just wanted someone to open a window. But it is also Goethe's last perfect metaphor: one final plea for illumination, from a writer who had spent all his life seeking it. ♦



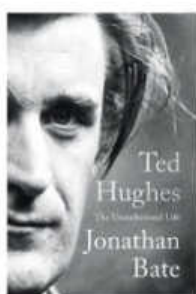
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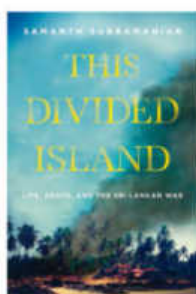
**MY NAME IS LUCY BARTON**, by *Elizabeth Strout* (Random House). Much of this beautifully unsentimental novel takes place over five days in a New York hospital, where Lucy Barton, the narrator, is recovering from surgery. Her estranged mother is also there, filling the room with endless unspoken memories about Lucy's deeply poor, troubled childhood. Strout, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "Olive Kitteridge," writes of a powerful, imperfect familial love. "Lucy comes from nothing," one character says. But Lucy knows that no one comes from nothing: we're haunted by our past every day. "This must be the way most of us maneuver through the world," Lucy reflects. "Half knowing, half not, visited by memories that can't possibly be true."



**ALL THE HOUSES**, by *Karen Olsson* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Helen, the protagonist of this novel, is of the woman-child type—resisting adult life. When her father has a heart attack, she returns to her childhood home, in Washington, D.C. She immerses herself in study of the Iran-Contra affair—the scandal that brought down her father, a high-level bureaucrat—and in memories of her teen-age years, writing vignettes of both as she reconsiders her family's identity. Olsson's depiction of upper-crust Beltway life is vivid. The novel's historical and personal strands don't always intellectually cohere, but their juxtaposition often has visceral force. Of a snowstorm at the height of the scandal, Helen recalls, "White out: the city was redacted."



**TED HUGHES**, by *Jonathan Bate* (Harper). Hughes, the husband of Sylvia Plath, was among the most prolific and important English poets of the twentieth century. This vigorous biography draws on unpublished letters, journals, and manuscripts, but Hughes's estate revoked permission to quote materials unrestrictedly, so the narrative, while grounded in source material, reads somewhat anecdotally. Bate deftly weaves together scenes of Hughes's rural Yorkshire boyhood and student days at Cambridge; his first encounter with Plath and their tumultuous life together; and his later appointment as British Poet Laureate. Bate, a professor of literature, gives sustained attention to Hughes's poems, substantiating the poet's own view that "as an imaginative writer, my only capital is my own life."



**THIS DIVIDED ISLAND**, by *Samantha Subramanian* (Thomas Dunne). While living in Sri Lanka, where nearly three decades of civil war came to a bloody end in 2009, the author collected stories from those who experienced it. He provides a history of the schism between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils on the island and probes the question of how members of each group managed to justify to themselves violence against the other. Subramanian writes evocatively, conveying the curdled mood of a country where the victorious state's heavy-handed attempt to enforce a veneer of normalcy is challenged by the catalogue of losses remembered and recounted in many "fantastic or tragic or melancholic or even happy stories."

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## TOUGH GIRLS

*"Jane Got a Gun" and "The Fifth Wave."*

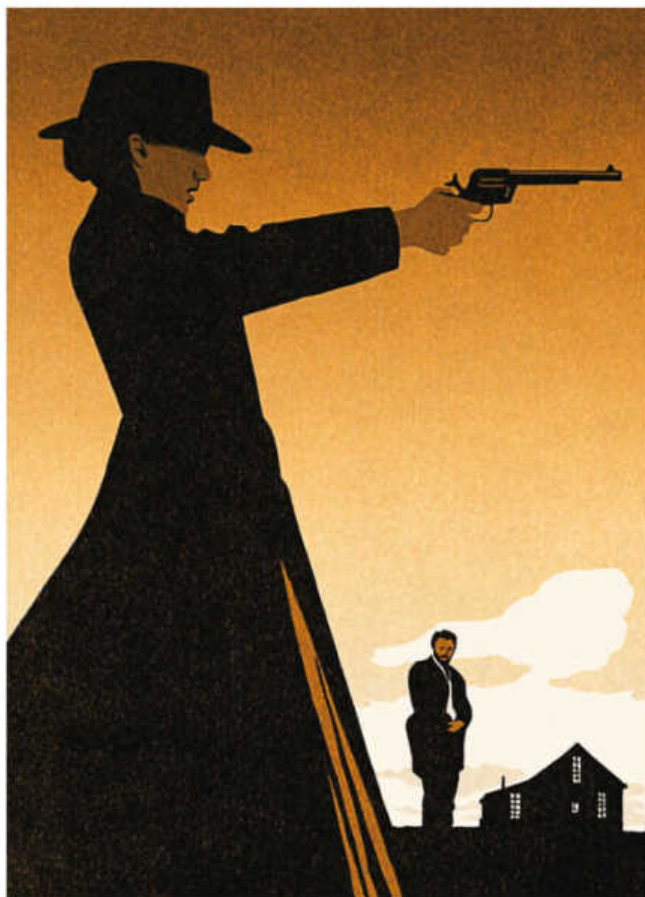
BY ANTHONY LANE

The title character in "Jane Got a Gun" is Jane Hammond (Natalie Portman), who lives with her young daughter in the New Mexico Territory. The year is 1871. Jane has a husband, Bill (Noah Emmerich), who has been gone awhile; now he returns, half dead, with bullets in his back. He tells her that he has tangled with "the Bishop boys," who are coming to exact revenge. The sensible course of action, at this point, would be for Jane to get out of there like a jackrabbit. Being more cussed than sensible, however, she stands her ground—farming the child out to a friend for safekeeping, then hunkering down to fortify the homestead and to prepare for attack.

As watchers of Westerns, we know what to expect next. A stranger should ride to the rescue; in short, we need a Shane. One reason for the endurance of George Stevens's film, from 1953, is the supreme equipoise that it finds between two contending impulses—the will to wander, moving restlessly through a desert land, versus the urge to take root, battling for your right to settle down and defying those who would snatch it away. If "Shane" is to be believed, the region was peopled with Van Heflins and mysteriously saved by Alan Ladd. The last filmmaker to demonstrate an instinctive grasp of that balance is Clint Eastwood, in films such as "Pale Rider." There he played Preacher, who, like Bill Hammond, had gunshot wounds in his back. You kept wondering if he might be the ghost of a cowboy—the very last word in wanderers.

The director of "Jane Got a Gun" is

Gavin O'Connor, who inches toward the tensions that come so naturally to Eastwood. But the film takes a curious step to one side. The bed-bound Bill is useless to Jane, so she looks for assistance elsewhere, recruiting a former beau named Dan Frost (Joel Edgerton), whom she left years before, and who has never quite recovered from



Natalie Portman and Joel Edgerton in a showdown out West.

the jilt. Instead of the Man with No Name, we get the Grumpy Old Flame. "I need a gunslinger," she says. "You need a goddam regiment," he replies, before offering to do the job himself. You can feel Edgerton striving manfully to strop his character into toughness. Hell, Dan is so rugged that chickens roam his living room, and anxious

homeowners will wish to study his master class in how to make your own booby traps—get a jar of vegetables, tip out the contents, fill it with kerosene, add a soupçon of rusty nails and glass shards, and then lay it tenderly in a trench. But that practical groundwork is undone, I regret to say, by a scene from an earlier time, in which Dan and Jane take a summer stroll through a field of swaying crops and exchange moony simpers, as if suddenly gripped by the desire to advertise a multigrain cereal. This was not how the West was won.

Nor is that the only flashback. One caption tells us that we are now in "Huntsville, Missouri, 1864," and helpfully adds, "Seven years before," in case we can't do the math. Bit by bit, we piece together the history of Jane: how she left Dan, joined a wagon train, fell afoul of varmints, and was cruelly used, before Bill came to her aid. From the plotting, two things emerge. First, this movie is in part a retread of "Hannie Caulder" (1971), in which Raquel Welch suffered no less bruising a fate, and took equally strong steps to correct it. I wasn't sure about the allusion until the latter stages of Jane's adventures, when she wears her hair long and loose and tops it with the same style of hat that was sported—more dashingly, it must be said—by Welch. "Hannie Caulder" is no masterpiece, but there is a gusto to its supporting cast that blows the new film away like dust: Robert Culp, Ernest Borgnine (of course) as the scowler-in-chief, and, rather less predictable, Christopher Lee as a gunsmith. The only figure in "Jane Got a Gun" who comes within yards of

that intensity is John Bishop, the boss of the marauders, who has black hair oddly matched with pale eyes, and a lick of politeness in his brutish soul. It took me a while to realize that crouching behind the thicket of mustache was none other than Ewan McGregor.

The second revelation, as the tale unfolds, is that the unfolding is in fact



a collapse. The backstory muddles rather than clarifies the front end, and the long wait for the climax is more of a dawdle than a ratcheting up. When the shootout finally arrived, with gunfire peppering the darkness, I sat up straight, as if an alarm clock had gone off. As for the aftermath, it suggests that the scriptwriters—Anthony Tambakis, Brian Duffield, and Edgerton himself—had scribbled random twists onto scraps of paper, tossed them into a bucket, shut their eyes, and plucked. Be not amazed. Since “Jane Got a Gun” was shot, in 2013, it has become a byword for the thousand comical shocks that the industry is heir to. Lynne Ramsay, the original director, left the project. Edgerton was set to play not Dan Frost but John Bishop, a role that was then passed from Jude Law to Bradley Cooper, before landing in McGregor’s lap. It’s a miracle, you might argue, that the film has crawled onto our screens at all, yet there have been countless hits whose birth pangs were similarly fraught. What do Frank Sinatra, John Wayne, Burt Lancaster, Robert Mitchum, Paul Newman, and Steve McQueen have in common? Each was approached for the Eastwood role in “Dirty Harry.”

As the Bishop gang looms, by night, Jane declares, “Whatever happens, I’m going to put my face to it.” Brave words, but can a face as famously beautiful as Portman’s ever show the weathering of such peril, or the scars of a hardscrabble life? Well, yes. It certainly did in “Cold Mountain,” where she played a lonely widow in a secluded shack, and which she stole in a few brief scenes—shooting down a fleeing soldier, and

weeping at the touch of a hand. Somehow, “Jane Got a Gun” fails to be scuffed by that sense of desperation, just as it forgets to cast an eye on the yawning spaces and enormous skies that we associate with the genre. I never even managed to sort out the geographical basics, such as how far it is, by horse, between the characters’ dwellings. When Jane pops over to Dan’s place, she’s like Phoebe, in “Friends,” going to see if Chandler and Joey are in. Then, there’s the weaponry. As titles go, “Jane Got a Gun” has a slangy punch, but the fact is that, when Jane got a gun, she wasn’t no good with the gun she got. So she got another gun. No matter how many guns she got, though, she got no satisfaction. In truth, she should have got another line of work. Put the evidence together, and it’s no surprise that this poor little movie fires blanks. It never wanted to be a Western at all.

The premise of “The Fifth Wave” is that our world is being taken over by aliens. Like chefs deciding on a tasting menu, they organize and phase their plan with exquisite care. In the first wave, they switch off the planet’s electrical power—a feat to be warmly applauded, since most of the major characters are teen-agers or younger, and only a complete shutdown will force them to abandon their cell phones. “Nice phone case” is the snappy line with which Cassie (Chloë Grace Moretz), “a totally normal high-school girl” from Ohio, greets a boy she has a crush on. His name is Ben (Nick Robinson), though his friends call him Zombie.

The second wave is a wave—a Biblical deluge, triggered by an earthquake, that sends Cassie and her young brother, Sam (Zackary Arthur), scrambling into a tree. “What it must be like nearer the ocean, I can only imagine,” Cassie says. Wrong. Only imagining is the one thing that no blockbuster, buff with digital muscle, would ever demand of us, and we are duly treated to the sight of London’s Tower Bridge and other global landmarks being swept aside. The third wave is avian flu, now fatal to humans, and the fourth involves aliens who enter our bodies without permission, squatting undetected and denying us the ability to work out who is what. “Why don’t they just get it over with?” Cassie asks, displaying a spooky ability to read my mind. The fifth wave is anyone’s guess.

The film is directed by J. Blakeson and adapted—though perhaps not adapted enough—from the novel by Rick Yancey. In other words, we are in the belly of young-adult fiction: a marketing wheeze dressed up as an art form, and stupendously summarized, in the movie, by the image of Cassie hurrying through the woods carrying both an assault rifle and a Teddy bear. The clever hook is that kids, who cannot be wormed into by the enemy, must be trained and armed to kill the grownups who can. The whole thing appears to have been designed by some crazed Oedipal wing of the N.R.A. And what are the aliens known as? The Others. I rest my case. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Paul Noth, must be received by Sunday, January 31st. The finalists in the January 18th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the February 22nd issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).*

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"I don't normally pick up guys like this."*  
Alejandro Paiuk, West Hartford, Conn.



### THE FINALISTS

*"I'm just the anesthesiologist."*  
Jeffrey Sobel, Woodstock, N.Y.

*"We're now emphasizing less cruel and more unusual."*  
David Wilkner, Pawtucket, R.I.

*"Stop saying 'KAPOW!' every time."*  
Bruce Brittain, Atlanta, Ga.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

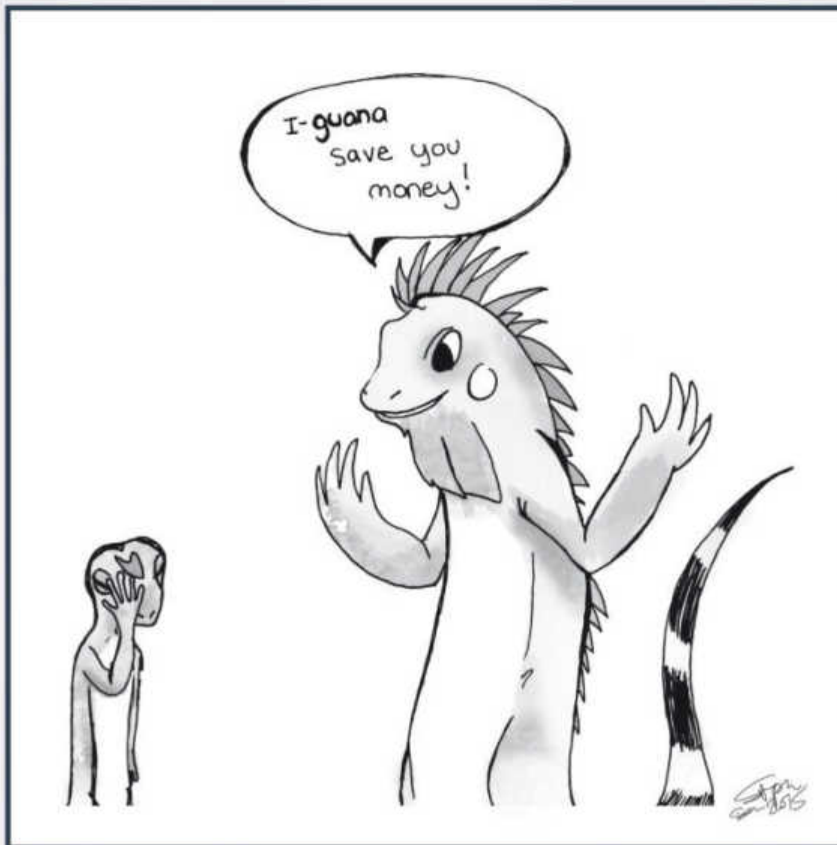


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What did one lizard  
say to the other?



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